EQUIPPING MEN FOR MINISTRY: A MODEL FOR MENTORSHIP AND REVITALIZATION OF MEN'S MINISTRIES

David A. Holder

BS, Bloomfield College, 1996
MTM, Stevens Institute of Technology, 1999
EMBA, Stevens Institute of Technology, 2005
MDiv, Drew University, 2013

Mentors

Philip Pointer, DMin
Danielle L. Brown, DMin
Charles Goodman, Jr., DMin

A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2026

United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH

Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project

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Mentors

Philip Pointer, DMin
Danielle L. Brown, DMin
Charles Goodman, Jr., DMin

Date: _____

Approved:

_____

_____
Faculty Mentor:

_____
Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies:

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEN FOR MINISTRY: A MODEL FOR MENTORSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION OF MEN'S MINISTRIES IN THE BLACK CHURCH

by
David A. Holder
United Theological Seminary, 2026

Mentors

Philip Pointer, DMin
Danielle L. Brown, DMin
Charles Goodman, Jr., PhD, DMin

The context was Shiloh Baptist Church in Plainfield, New Jersey. There is low participation among men in the men's ministry. If the men participate in a discipleship class focused on mentorship training, then they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male members. Questionnaires, interviews, group discussions, and journaling were used to collect data to assess the impact of discipleship classes on men’s knowledge and desire to become mentors. It is expected that men's participation in the ministry will increase as they experience a renewed brotherhood and affirmation of identity and self-worth within this reinvigorated framework of support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to take this moment to sincerely thank and cherish the amazing mentors who have guided me throughout this transformative journey: Reverend Dr. Philip Pointer and Reverend Dr. Charles Goodman, Jr. Your guidance has gone beyond professionalism; it has been inspiring, compassionate, and profoundly encouraging. You challenged, motivated, and corrected me with love, shaping me into a better leader, minister, and individual. You have fostered a lively community of support that I will always cherish being part of.

To my PBG family, these past three years have been among the most joyful and enriching of my life. Being part of such a vibrant and thriving community of leaders, friends, and colleagues is a true blessing; I can genuinely call you family. To the greatest cohort partners, the PBG graduating class of 2026: I love each and every one of you! We started together, and we have reached this point together. To my cohort sisters, Dr. Pamela Fraizer, Dr. Crystal Bullock, and Dr. Angela Garner; our doctoral clerk, Dr. D. J. Thomas; and my peer associate and brother, Dr. Eric Bostick, thank you for keeping us on track. I am deeply grateful for the logistical and spiritual support you provided along this journey and for the steadfast community you continue to be. These three years have been demanding and often stressful, but we achieved this together. I will never forget this time and look forward to seeing what God has in store for all of us.

I extend sincere thanks to my professional associates, Rev. Dr. Alexander McDonald III, Rev. Dr. Kenneth Clayton, and Rev. Dr. Reginald Davenport, for your invaluable support and guidance throughout this educational process. Your insights were critical to my transformation and development. To my contextual associate, Deacon Charles Hand, thank you for your commitment and support in implementing the project. Your continued encouragement truly made the difference between failure and success. I must also thank Rev. Sheila Thorpe and Dr. Fannie Gordon for your unwavering support, guidance, and patience. You made this journey easier with your presence.

To my pastor, the Reverend Dr. Danielle L. Brown: there are not enough pages to express how much I love and appreciate your leadership, your trust, and your support of my ministry and this doctoral journey. When I came to Shiloh Baptist three years ago, I was broken, worn, and tired. I saw nothing but the sunset on my ministry and life; I was dry bones in the middle of a desert. Your love and trust have grown me in ways I never expected. Your commitment to excellence has stretched me as a minister of the Gospel and as a human being. You spoke to these dry bones and called them to live again. Thank you for seeing the ministry in me and showing me how to love again. I see my calling anew, and I am excited for what is next. I am forever grateful to you.

Finally, to my Shiloh Baptist Church family: thank you for your encouragement, support, and unwavering prayer throughout this entire journey. Your faith in me has been a constant source of strength. This is not the end, but the beginning of greater things in God, and I cannot wait to walk into them together with you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work first and foremost to the God who sits high and looks low, who loved me before I took my first breath and will love me into eternity, despite how short I fall before His perfect grace. Without God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, I could not have accomplished this work or completed this journey that has transformed my life and the lives of all who have been part of this sacred endeavor.

I dedicate this work to my parents, the late Roger Holder and Dr. Barbara Holder. To my father, who rests in eternity until the return of Christ: thank you for showing me your deep love, compassion, and the strength to love humanity beyond our faults. You taught me to see the beauty and royalty in my manhood and to own and share it with others. The man I am today is a result of the legacy and investment of love you gave me. To my mother, Dr. Barbara Holder: thank you for your patient love and for being a powerful example of pursuing education for the sake of family and community transformation. You have passed on a mantle of service that I can only hope to approach one day. Your drive for excellence and your love for people are the forces I bring into a ministry destined to turn the world upside down.

To the gifts God allowed to enter my life—those who have departed and those who remain—each has left a lasting impact. To the late Reverend Robert Cornish, Charles Cornish, Harry Cornish, and Robert Cornish, Jr.: these are the men who shaped me in my early adult years. They taught me what it means to be a man of God—dedicated

to service, family, and the creation of better opportunities for African Americans. They sleep with the ancestors now, but my heart will forever cherish every moment I spent at their feet, receiving the wisdom and lessons of manhood etched upon my soul. I thank God for the Cornish men.

To the men who stay and keep pouring into my life: my two sons, David Robert Holder and Davion Charles Holder. Thank you for your continuous support; you are a light in the darkness and a proud reflection of the years I have invested in you. You have been my greatest cheerleaders throughout this doctoral journey, and I love you for the men you have become.

Finally, I dedicate this to my beloved wife, Dr. Charla Holder. Thank you for your prayers, steadfast encouragement, and dedication throughout this entire journey, even when the demands of this work meant I was physically or mentally absent. I love you and sincerely appreciate your partnership as God continues to lead and guide us in this work.

INTRODUCTION

When I was a young boy growing up in Brooklyn, New York, the one thing that I always wanted was to be like my father. From a young boy to a young man entering the service. My father had set the guidance of the type of man that I had aspired to become. My father was not perfect. My father did not make much money. He was not a superstar, and my father did not even have a college education. However, he cared about the humanity of others and their uplift, and he loved his family and his God.

It is with these thoughts and emotions that I entered this journey at United Theological Seminary. This journey of discovery, exploring, enrichment, and tears. It has been one that has invigorated, challenged, and, most importantly, stretched and grown who I am as a man, a servant of God, and, most importantly, a student of his word in ministry. This thesis, which is entitled “Equipping Men For Ministry: A Model For Mentorship and Revitalization of Men's Ministries,” and its associated project came about through much prayer, observation, and personal reflection.

Shiloh Baptist Church, Plainfield, New Jersey, meets on the third Saturday of each month for ten months of the year. On average, attendance is between twenty-five and thirty men. But over the first three years, the church has grown by more than 150%. Yeah, during this period, membership has increased, including the number of men joining the congregation. The number of men participating in men's fellowship has remained the same.

The challenge with the men's ministry is that it operates under a leadership model rooted in the pastor's direct involvement, established by Pastor Henry. This leadership model is rooted in the historical perspective that as the pastor goes, so does the church. It was hierarchical in nature and linked to the pastor's charisma and focus.

The challenge the ministry faced during Pastor Henry's tenure was that his attention went to other ministries and priorities once he had the men's ministry up and running, and then eventually his tenure ended. The ministry's leadership model did not change. With this existing ministry model, the focus was not on growth but on maintaining what was in place, and so, from Pastor Henry through the current pastor, Rev. Dr. Danielle L. Brown, this model has remained in place.

This leadership model is not sustainable when the central leader no longer invests time and energy in maintaining the man we looked to as the encouragement, the guide, and the example for the team. This has led to the ministry's stagnation and the need to introduce a new leadership model to drive change and transformation.

The problem statement and the hypothesis come from the first chapter, where my ministry journey is discussed and reviewed, along with a contextual analysis of the Shiloh Baptist Church of Plainfield, New Jersey. In this chapter, we explore both personal and contextual analyses and present a synergistic view that leads to the problem statement and the hypothesis that addresses it.

The biblical foundations are found in Chapter Two, and the biblical underpinning is Mark 1:16-20, where Jesus calls four disciples to join him in the ministry of revealing the Kingdom of God to the people of Israel and the world.[1] It is in these biblical

[1] Biblical citations are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated, Mark 1:16-20.

foundations that we discover and review the call, response, and, most importantly, the identity wrapped up in both when Jesus called men to ministry.

Chapter Three comprises the historical foundations and the story of Reverend Lemuel Haynes, the first African American ordained in the United States by the Congregational Church. We look here and see how, even in the midst of a society that looked at him as different and less than, even in a predominantly White community, Lemuel Haynes was able, because of the community, relationships, and mentorship that he received, to know who he was in God and become an instrument that would speak truth to power in his time. It is through the analysis and examination of his life that we see how these can be connected to resolving the problem and the challenge the men's ministry faces, and to building relationships among men.

Then we move on to Chapter Four, where we will examine the theological foundations of the project. We examine Relational Theology, which holds that God is relational. If God is relational towards us, then we, being created in the image of God, must be relational to one another and to God; these matters, and this foundation supports addressing the relationship between men and how men connect and form relationships.

Chapter Five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, takes us through an exploration of transformational leadership, and here we will look at the theory of transformational leadership, comparing it to transactional leadership, and connecting this to mentorship through transformational leadership. The comparison of the two disciplines paints a picture of how men relate to one another and begin to create safe and sacred spaces for men to authentically be present with one other.

The final chapter, Chapter Six: Project Analysis, provides an analysis of the collected data. You will also find the project's conclusion, impact, and an assessment of whether the project successfully influenced the men who participated in the discipleship class. It also addresses whether this shift was sufficient to begin implementing changes in the men's ministry.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

This chapter delves into the confluence between my personal ministerial growth and the unique landscape of Shiloh Baptist Church in Plainfield, New Jersey. Throughout this discourse, I aim to articulate my developmental journey, expounding the skills and talents honed through my ministry experience and professional occupation. Moreover, I intend to illuminate the convergence of contextual challenges within my church context and how they resonate with my proficiencies and passions. These intersections are what identified the need for my project, which is the focal point of this dissertation.

Context

Shiloh Baptist Church is located at 515 W. 4th St., Plainfield, New Jersey, and has served the Plainfield and nearby communities for over a century. The church was founded on May 19, 1908, and has a predominantly African American Baptist congregation. Shiloh Baptist Church is a founding member of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. In the past 115 years, ten pastors have led the church. The pastors relevant to this context are the eighth pastor, the late Rev. Dr. Gerald Lamont Thomas; the ninth pastor, Rev. Hodari Kenneth Hamilton Sr.; and the current tenth pastor of Shiloh Baptist, Rev. Dr. Danielle L. Brown. It is under Pastor Thomas that the church

has constructed a new facility worth $13.2 million and covering 69,500 square feet, to house the church and the church's Union County TEAMS Charter School, which provides education from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The school was established on September 7, 2005, and operates within the lower section of the church facility. The church established "The Lord's Kitchen," a Food Pantry ministry that feeds many families facing food insecurity in the community. It was under Pastor Hamilton that the Sunday basketball program and the weekly Wednesday 7:45 a.m. morning prayer were established. Martial arts classes are also available on Saturdays.

The current senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Danielle L. Brown, is the first woman to serve in this position in the church's history. She was called to this role in August 2021 and has served since October 2021. Under the leadership of Pastor Brown, Shiloh has transformed into a more inclusive, open, and loving ministry that genuinely lives up to its mission statement, "The Place of Peace Where Jesus Is Lord, and You Are Loved!" Pastor Brown has encouraged Shiloh leaders to adopt an open, creative leadership style that brings people together to celebrate Jesus Christ and offer salvation. She demonstrated through her example that being a Christian is not a burden, but a joy, and that living a balanced life is what God desires for God's people. Pastor Brown has achieved this by delivering sound biblical preaching and teachings on the importance of relationships and community, and how we can grow together in Christ Jesus. This is a departure from the traditional expectations of leaders and members in Black Baptist churches, where people were often either just Sunday spectators or entirely consumed by the church with no room for other aspects of life.

Pastor Brown's leadership and approach to practical theology are apparent in the atmosphere of morning worship. The worship has a clear intention to worship God as a community. Adults and children are included in the primary worship, and children can be themselves. Although they have their own Children's Church twice a month, they attend worship with the whole faith community before attending. The worship service is welcoming and open to all. It includes elements that recognize and embrace visitors, making them feel at home. The Cordial and Usher Ministries are warm and inviting, providing smiles and directions that make even the most skeptical visitor feel the love. The invitation to discipleship and joining Shiloh Baptist Church reflects the belief that every person is essential and valuable.

Pastor Brown follows the traditional approach of offering salvation to the lost sinner first, then membership to the saved individuals who do not have a church home. However, there is a unique and creative change in the third call. Pastor Brown offers those who are hesitant to walk down the aisle to the front of the church to go instead to the new membership room outside the sanctuary. She says, “Our traditions are not more important than your transformation.” This means that the church's priority is to care for the most important thing to God, humanity. This has further been translated into ministries to meet the members’ and the community's needs through ministries like Shiloh’s partnership with Three Brothers Basketball to host free basketball clinics for children and teenagers twice a week, conducting outdoor service street block style to be outside the four walls and in the community.

Over the past years, Shiloh’s has seen membership grow under the leadership of Pastor Brown's ministry. In 2020, the congregation comprised 366 members, 63% of

whom were women and 37% men. Most members (83%) were over fifty years old. The church has experienced significant growth in membership. According to an email from the church leadership, the membership counts for 2023, 2024, and the end of the third quarter of 2025 were 985, 1,154, and 1,296, respectively. The percentage growth, based on 2020 as the starting year, for each of these years is as follows: 2023, 150%; 2024, 315%; and 2025, 354%, with 52% living outside the city of Plainfield. These members reside in New Jersey towns, including Piscataway, South Plainfield, Somerset, Scotch Plains, Linden, Rahway, and Union. Additionally, seventy-two others live in different states, including New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Nevada. One member even resides in Saudi Arabia.

Our congregation has grown significantly over the past five years, with previously underrepresented age groups now participating more. The twenty-five to thirty-four age group comprises 10.8% of the congregation, while the thirty-five to fifty-four age group comprised 21%. Shiloh Baptist Church leadership also shared via email that, in contrast, members aged fifty and older now account for just over 50% of the congregation, down from 83% in 2020. It is encouraging to see how Shiloh has transformed from a traditional Baptist church with stagnant membership into a vibrant, growing community. A multigenerational church offers many more opportunities to impact the world for the kingdom.

One area of focus for us is the growing number of members who live outside of Plainfield and how we can accommodate this expansion. Currently, more than 50% of our congregation lives outside the town, with members residing in eighty-two municipalities across New Jersey. We need to consider the implications of this growth

going forward. Will we see continued increases in members outside of Plainfield? If so, how do we manage this group within the congregation? Should we consider building a second location, and if so, where and when?

Another essential aspect to consider is our virtual membership, known as VFAM. Our dedicated team works with virtual family members to ensure they feel connected to the church. However, as our church continues to grow, we need to think about how we can build and maintain genuine relationships with this segment of our congregation. This is crucial to the church's continued growth and success.

Upon analyzing the membership data, we observe a 5% shift in the proportion of women relative to men from 2020 to 2023, and from 2023 to 2025. The unexpected discovery was that the percentages remained consistent from 2023 through 2025: 33% of men and 67% of women. This data, in light of the state population data and the city of Plainfield, is interesting. For the state of New Jersey, with a population of over nine million, the breakdown is consistently 49% men and 51% women, and the city of Plainfield, with a population of fifty-seven thousand, is consistently 51% women and 49% men. This shift concerns me as Shiloh has traditionally involved more men in the church. Based on my analysis, I feel certain areas of the church need to be addressed to manage and sustain the rapid growth and transformation occurring in the context. The church has experienced a remarkable 357% increase, resulting in changes to the congregation's makeup. The church now has members from the Millennials and Gen Z generations. The growth is not just local; the church has members from over seventy-two New Jersey municipalities and several states and countries. With more than 50% of the

membership from outside of Plainfield, New Jersey, there is a need to rethink discipleship and ministry strategies.

Pastor Brown continues to address the concerns and challenges in the church's growth. She has created a leadership development process that provides guidance and support to new and prospective leaders. As a result, she recently licensed nine ministers of the Gospel and ordained nine deacons. Two women are serving as deacons for the first time in Shiloh's 115-year history. Additionally, seven deaconesses and seven ministers of the Gospel were consecrated, and Pastor Brown received and consecrated three ordained ministers with ordination credentials.

When the church called Pastor Brown to become the first woman in its history as the senior pastor, this leadership change sparked a transformation and explosive growth in ministry and membership. Amid this experience, we have the men’s ministry model established under Pastor Thomas, which has remained unchanged during his tenure and Pastor Hamilton's tenure. You have a ministry has not experienced transformation or change for over fifteen years. When leadership and ministry have not kept pace with the church’s changes, the view of ministry is outdated and not aligned with the challenges of the day.

This loss is further exacerbated by the passing of the Rev. Gerald Lamont Thomas, the eighth pastor, in October 2023. This loss was more apparent to the men who had been members for five years or more. There were several discussions about how he impacted and supported the men. I believe this added to the exclusiveness of the men’s ministry. As the membership has grown, the number of men has grown, but as a cohesive segment in the church, they are searching for their identity amid the church's

transformation. This will require a new leadership model and framework that clarifies identity and reaffirms the value and place of men in the church's transformation and vision.

The late pastor's leadership model has traditionally served as an example for men in the church and community to follow. For over a century, men have had male pastors as their role models for Christian living. Still, the change in Shiloh's leadership to a female senior pastor requires a new mentorship model for the men. This model will implement a new approach to building men's mentoring and relational support, bringing cohesiveness to the men as a group. This model must help men shift their mindsets about what they have become comfortable with, embracing discomfort to build new relationships with other men.

This is so important, especially now as we see the rise of mental health issues among African American men now more than ever. Sixty-two percent of African American men have been exposed to a traumatic event in their lifetime. Seventy-two percent have witnessed a traumatic event, and 59% have learned of a traumatic event involving a friend or family member.[1] Typically, these men are not going for therapy and are dealing with the result of such trauma on their own. The brotherhood and male mentor circle create a space for men to be open and authentic.

Micheal Curtis, in his study, followed 500 African American men from their teens to their twenties and he states the following: “We found when Black men were exposed to childhood adversity, they may develop an internal understanding of the world as

[1] R. Motley and A. Banks, “Black Males, Trauma, and Mental Health Service Use: A Systematic Review,” *Perspect Soc Work* 14, no. 1 (2018 Summer): 4-19, PMID: 30556064, PMCID: PMC6292675.

somewhere they are devalued."[2] There is a need for mentorship and pointing men back to who they are and what it means to be valued. They can receive this from a ministry that helps create spaces for healing through transformational mentoring. "The more that systems, programs, and providers find culturally relevant ways to foster Black men's mental health—including directly addressing racial trauma and its effects—the more society will benefit, added Wizdom Powell, PhD, an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Connecticut and director of the university's Health Disparities Institute."[3]

The men's ministry must become more relevant to address low participation. This ministry model must create a safe space where men can be their authentic selves, free from judgment and supported. We must be one of the havens from our oppressive society. Still, the ministry must change to effect the transformation necessary to foster growth and change in the men of Shiloh and the community. This additional quote from Dr. Powell shows what is on the line for African American men. "Interventions shouldn't be just about healing and restoring Black men, though that would be enough," she said. "We also need to think about how much talent we're hemorrhaging" by not providing Black men with the proper support. Think of all the innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists, and physicians there would be if Black men weren't being killed with impunity by police

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[2] Steven M. Kogan et al., "Childhood Adversity and Racial Discrimination Forecast Suicidal and Death Ideation Among Emerging Adult Black Men: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* (Feb. 8, 2024): 10.1037. doi:10.1037/cdp0000641.

[3] Tori DeAngelis, "Black Men's Mental Health Matters," Monitor on Psychology, https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/09/ce-black-mental-health.

officers and if we were creating spaces for them to heal, grow, and thrive."[4] We must do something now.

Ministry Journey

Throughout my life journey, I have developed various interests and skills that will benefit my ministry and personal life. Education, ministry, and life experiences have shaped my worldview and approach to ministry. Although I am keenly interested in science and technology, it is not the allure of shiny new inventions that excites me, but rather their impact on people's lives, particularly within families and communities. My love for science fiction and fantasy novels has also played a vital role in nurturing this interest.

During my time in the U.S. Army, I experienced a reality of life that helped me develop a profound ability to connect with people unlike me. I learned that fundamentally, people are the same, but their circumstances and environment can change them. This experience taught me to see more of God in others and not to be self-centered all the time. Additionally, I gained a genuine appreciation for the value of my high school education, which motivated me to pursue further education shortly before and after my discharge from the Army.

I left the U.S. military service and began working as a technician at Verizon. Over thirty-four years, I gained a bachelor of business from Bloomfield College, a master's in technology management, an executive master's in business administration in technology management from Stevens Institute of Technology, and finally, a master's in divinity

[4] Tori DeAngelis, "Black Men's Mental Health Matters," Monitor on Psychology, https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/09/ce-black-mental-health.

from Drew Seminary. I also have other master's certificates in Project Management, which I obtained to meet my job requirements. This is important because my skills and interests were shaped through my experience in ministry and at Verizon.

Throughout my career at Verizon, I have developed the business acumen and leadership skills to identify talented individuals and build cohesive teams that work together toward the shared vision and goals of the organization. My experience has equipped me to analyze and assess data, make informed decisions, and compellingly present my findings to senior leadership. Additionally, I have led teams in evaluating other groups' or projects' operations and performances, using these insights to ensure future success.

In my twenty-seven-year journey in ministry, I have always brought my whole self to the table. Starting as a deacon and Christian education teacher, I was passionate about connecting with the children and youth in my class. I took the time to listen to them, understand their language and concerns, and tried my best to make the Gospel relatable to their everyday lives. As I grew in my role and became the director and youth minister, I began to see ministry from a pastoral perspective. I felt called to pastoral ministry and discussed this with my pastor. I noticed that youth ministries were often an afterthought for the church, and I knew we could do better. I wanted to see the youth as an integral part of the faith community. But how do you bring about change?

During my time as a youth minister and then as a youth pastor, I continued to seek God's direction on how best to serve the youth and their families. I listened to the concerns of parents and guardians and kept an open heart and mind. With God's guidance, I began making positive changes in the lives of the youth and their families.

When I was appointed youth pastor, my senior pastor advised me to assemble a team. I relied on my skill set to build the team, sought advice from others, and most importantly, looked to God for guidance. God handpicked each leader to fill a specific role and purpose in the team. They worked together cohesively and excelled in their roles. I recognized the importance of delegation in a ministry setting, which differs from the corporate environment and requires a nuanced approach. The leadership team launched ministries such as Children's Church, Youth Basketball, Weekly Youth Bible Study, Junior Deacon, and Deaconess ministries. We also introduced new elements to invigorate the worship experience, such as Youth Praise Dancers, Youth Choir, and Ushers. Additionally, we formed partnerships with other churches and organizations to start the True Love Waits Ministry and various ministries to support parents and families facing a crisis.

I have served on the Joint Board and Community Development Corporation (CDC) of Second Baptist Church in Paterson, New Jersey, known as Rising Dove CDC. During my tenure, I worked with both leadership teams and contributed to the construction of the fifty-unit senior citizen housing building known as the Rising Dove Senior Apartments. Furthermore, the CDC formed a ministry focused on Substance Abuse and HIV and organized summer camps on church properties in partnership with the city.

During my five-year tenure as a youth pastor, unexpected changes led to significant personal losses, marking a turning point in my life's trajectory. This period became a transformative crucible, redirecting my focus and priorities. During this period, I experienced a gradual breakdown of crucial relationships with male figures who had

been my pillars in navigating both Christian faith and life. Looking back, it all began with losing my role as a youth pastor, which left me perplexed and disheartened. Unfortunately, I also grieved the loss of my closest friend, which compounded the sense of loss. Moreover, the sudden notification of my job loss within thirty days intensified my frustration and feelings of failure, further exacerbated by the absence of understanding and support from those around me.

Struggling with a mix of anger, frustration, and an overwhelming sense of grief, I sought solace and guidance from my pastor at the time. Expressing my need for time to grapple with these intense emotions, which later revealed themselves as facets of grieving from multiple losses, I sought understanding and space to process. While my pastor agreed to my request for a time, regrettably, this marked the beginning of a strain and eventual rupture in our relationship. Boundaries were placed, severing our previous mentor-mentee dynamic. Despite this, I remained committed to serving as my faith directed, even as I felt disconnected from the pastoral support I once relied on.

I continued as a member of the church for several years. The pastor was my pastor and nothing more during this time. While I fulfilled various roles within the church, I was not assigned to a specific ministry. It was not until six years later that we had an honest conversation about my place within the church's ministry. During our discussion, he shared that he did not know what to do with me, as he had thought I would be pastoring a church by now.

Interestingly, he had not provided any support or development for my pastoral roles aside from issuing reference letters. Furthermore, he eliminated the youth pastor role, which made it even more challenging for me to develop my pastoral skills. In

our last meeting, he regretted not doing more to grow the other ministers and me before retiring.

I served in several leadership roles that helped guide the church through tough times. We faced economic downturns and issues with our church bank, which led us to file for Chapter Eleven bankruptcy. However, we emerged from it stronger and financially stable. Not long after COVID-19 hit and the church was closed for nearly two years, I led the effort to move our traditional worship model to online worship and our giving in just a few days. We streamed Sunday worship services and weekly Bible studies on Facebook. Despite the challenges, the church's finances were better than in years. We continued our ministry, reaching people and providing information and vaccinations as they became available.

A few months after COVID, my former pastor retired, and a new pastor was called to Second Baptist Church. Despite this change, I continued to actively serve and support the new pastor in various capacities. Eventually, I was asked to become the director of the multimedia ministry, overseeing the church's online digital presence and all technology-related things. Additionally, I was tasked with continuing to facilitate the Pastor Advisory Council, which involved communicating the pastor's vision and mission for the church. The council organized leadership workshops and, in collaboration with the ministry calendar, with the pastor. As a joint board member, I also played a crucial role in navigating the split in the church's leadership after the pastoral search was completed. This was important to ensure unity and continuity in the ministry within and outside the church community.

Intertwined with these losses were the departures of my father, father-in-law, and uncle-in-law. Their absence left a void in the male support network that had been instrumental in guiding me through life's complexities and shaping my identity as an African American man. Their influence was profound, helping me navigate an unjust world and defining my responses to its challenges. Amidst these personal upheavals were the global turmoil of the pandemic and the tragic killing of George Floyd, which was brought to the forefront. While responses varied across different spheres, the most impactful reaction came from an unexpected source—my own company. Witnessing their proactive initiative to address the underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership roles was profound. This internal movement aimed to increase the numbers and ensure the retention of a community long subject to discrimination within existing systems. After a year of implementing various programs, the overall numbers improved, and the team was happy with the progress. I asked for the number of African American males and compared it with the previous year's data. Unfortunately, the percentage of African American men in leadership positions decreased even though the company's total number of African Americans increased. This was the opposite of what we were trying to achieve through the program, which was started due to the unjust killing of an African American man and the stories shared of discrimination against African American men. Despite this, the company still viewed the program as a success.

There is a growing awareness that existing programs and efforts must be improved to create opportunities for African American men. As a result, there is a renewed interest in lifting African American men, regardless of age, and ensuring that they have the support they need to succeed in a hostile environment. We must create safe

spaces where they can grow, nurture their talents, and become their whole, authentic selves, as God intended. Historically, Black fraternities have provided such spaces, but not everyone can be part of these brotherhoods. That is why the church needs to step up and create similar spaces welcoming to all men. This is especially important for families, as stronger families lead to stronger churches and communities.

My ministry project will focus on encouraging and supporting Christian men, especially within minority communities, to build a robust support system that can adapt to Shiloh's continued transformation over the next few years. This is where I can make a real difference.

Developing the Synergy

For more than twenty-seven years, I have lived as a bi-vocational minister, which has afforded me the blessing of working in the corporate space and as a minister of the Gospel. This has provided opportunities to learn and develop my leadership and management abilities. As a result, I have been successful in my corporate and ministry work and service. As this has been a blessing, it has been a challenge as I have experienced and observed systematic discrimination in the workplace. These experiences opened my eyes to the fact that forms of discrimination are alive and well, and it takes someone to find ways to fight and support those who are being oppressed. It led me to ensure I am involved in mentoring and supporting minorities in my workplace and beyond, helping them navigate corporate spaces and succeed.

This has become a passion for me, and as I have supported others in their careers over the years, I have not been able to find similar support until recently. As I began to

experience career movement, I became aware of the lack of minority men in leadership roles. I was seeing the advancement of African American women, and it was about time they made way for them. Still, it seemed that African American men were becoming extinct in the workplace. The program for supporting African American men is nonexistent, and the ones that are supposed to be for them are not promoting them but have further excluded them.

This has created my passion for bringing men together to support, affirm, and raise one another, and to raise the young men coming up behind us, so they can fulfill our God-appointed potential on earth. Personally and ministerially, losses in male relationships have revealed the burden of finding ways to establish or build support for people who are struggling with life challenges or seem to be drifting aimlessly, trying to find their footing or direction. It is minority men who have the heavy burden of society's systematic discrimination and the struggle of being affirmed and acknowledged as the men God has created us to be.

I am passionate about ministry to the whole person throughout my ministry. I have realized that having a support system of male role models, mentors, and father figures was crucial for my development. Unfortunately, I learned this lesson through my experience of losing my community of men, which provided a safe, supportive, and affirming space for me to develop into my authentic self. It made me realize how precious and crucial these relationships between men and across the generations of men are. I have developed a passion for helping men and young men build the crucial mentor relationships that come from being part of a support network like a brotherhood.

During my twenty years working in corporate America as an African American, I have been exposed to discrimination for many years, and it was the support of other African American men who supported and created opportunities for my career. The support provided to me within such a hostile environment was an oasis in the desert of oppression. My experience has caused me to give similar support to other African Americans. I have become a mentor and a listening ear for others trying to build their careers in a corporate environment.

Within the last decade, there has been an increase in diversity programs to address many of the isms in the corporate spaces. We have seen the progress of minority women. What we have not seen is the progression of African American men in the corporate space, and if anything, they seem to be disappearing. Seeing the progress made in increasing diversity and providing more opportunities for women of color is inspiring. However, it is troubling to observe that minority men are fading into the background, even with diversity programs to promote diversity. Therefore, we must develop and strengthen our cultural armor as we continue to navigate and engage within a society that makes it challenging to be a Black man in America.

My leadership style, as a servant leader, seamlessly with the focused project management approach. It is about meticulously laying out and tracking the path defined by the casted vision, guiding others through programs, and adeptly navigating unforeseen challenges. My calling is to empower people, pushing them beyond perceived limits because my gift of discernment and encouragement has helped reveal their untapped potential. This fervent zeal is not confined solely to ministry; it is entwined with a profound affection for families and youth. I am driven to empower them and guide them

toward excellence. My perspective on ministry extends beyond the confines of the church, seeking opportunities and forging partnerships with external organizations to innovate solutions that address unmet needs.

My contextual analysis of Shiloh Baptist has revealed that the change in pastoral leadership has changed the leadership model. This new leadership model transforms the ministry and the church's growth. Amid all the changes, the men's ministry has not been able to find its place in ministry. The men have not been able to shift from the old model of a male pastor as the driving force behind the men's ministry. The loss of this male mentoring relationship has been challenging for the men. They have been unable to find their place within the new leadership model.

This sense of loss is similar to the loss of a father figure, and the men cannot venture outside their comfort zones to create new relationships with men. I believe this loss has revealed a sense of brokenness that is like my brokenness. Where there is brokenness, there is an opportunity for healing and restoration. The healing must occur before the brokenness keeps the men from connecting with the new men in the membership's millennial and Gen Z segment. This can replicate brokenness, affecting the men's growth, both individually and collectively. This issue will also hinder trust-building between the men in the church and the men in the communities. We need to create a place of fellowship where men can feel safe being authentic without worry about being judged or stigmatized.

The church's growth has raised concerns about supporting its expanding membership in different locations while maintaining a strong sense of community. The current systems in place may need to be revised for long-term growth. As someone with

experience in remote technologies and solutions, I believe that implementing streaming, online giving, and other solutions can help foster a sense of community among virtual members. We experienced this during the COVID era when physical presence in the main church building was no longer necessary to participate in Sunday worship. However, it is essential to explore ways to strengthen bonds between virtual members and the church and determine whether virtual participation constitutes membership. Through my loss experience, I can see a problem with the men of Shiloh. As the contextual analysis shows, the issue is the organizational loss of male mentorship and leadership examples for men. They are not equipped to handle and navigate the impact of the church's changes and growth. There are strong men in leadership and a few within the context. Still, they need a new leadership and mentorship model to reinvigorate the ministry, one that is not stuck in an old, non-inclusive perspective but is inclusive in its engagement with the larger context. This means they must become uncomfortable in learning new ways of mentoring that are inviting and open, and will require courage to become open and vulnerable to other men. This new leadership model will require men to rise to become the ambassadors of this new way of being
and connecting.

As our congregation grows, the leadership is concerned that new members may become disengaged and simply attend church without actively participating. As a faith community, we must build strong relationships with each other and the larger community. To continue growing, we must develop ways to encourage participation without making people feel obligated. Our goal is to assist individuals in identifying their unique calling from God and becoming a part of our larger community. Throughout my

ministry journey over several years, I have embraced the guiding principles of Rick Warren's Five Circles of Commitment model, albeit with adjustments tailored to the nuances of our unique community.[5] This framework has been instrumental in shaping how I approach ministry and engage with individuals, allowing me to effectively gauge and nurture their levels of commitment within our community's context. Integrating this model has provided structure and empowered me to adapt strategies, ensuring a more meaningful and impactful connection with the community and the people I serve.

The analysis of my ministry journey and the study of the context led to the following problem statement and a hypothesis. This work has examined whether the problem has improved. The men's ministry at Shiloh Baptist, located at 515 W. 4th St. in Plainfield, New Jersey, is experiencing low participation despite significant overall growth in membership. This problem stems from the fact that the current men's ministry model has not changed with the overall church transformation. It does not support the intercultural ministry outreach that is required for the ministry to grow.

I hypothesize that if the men of Shiloh participate in a discipleship class focused on mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members. This will transform the ministry model from a leadership model based on the ministry leader to a team-oriented leadership model equipped to reach all men across all cultural spaces, revitalizing men's engagement in the ministry. We will begin the review in the next chapter by reviewing the biblical foundation for the study and how the selected scripture supports the overall assumptions of the work.

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[5] Richard Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publisher, 1995), 130-134.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

As we begin our review of the biblical foundation. It is important to restate the problem statement and hypothesis to ensure the framework. The problem statement is the following: the men's ministry at Shiloh Baptist, located at 515 W. 4th St. in Plainfield, New Jersey, is experiencing low participation despite significant overall membership growth. This problem stems from the fact that the current men's ministry model has not changed with the overall church transformation. It does not support the intercultural ministry outreach that is required for the ministry to grow. The hypothesis is the following: if the men of Shiloh participate in a discipleship class focused on mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members. This will transform the ministry model from a leadership model based on the ministry leader to a team-oriented leadership model equipped to reach all men across all cultural spaces, revitalizing men's engagement in the ministry.

This chapter will explore the biblical implications of this problem and hypothesis. Mark 1:16-20 is a text that many scholars refer to as the call of Jesus' first disciples or as an example of what true discipleship to Jesus looks like. Dialogue will take place with the text and other scholars' voices from the pericope of discipleship. To understand the deeper meaning of the text and discipleship, we need to understand the Gospel of Mark.

Many scholars consider this the first of the synoptic gospels because it was written between 60 and 70 AD.[1] As we explore this aspect of the book, we understand the significance of Mark and how it contributes to the other gospels not just as a source of information but also in the written structure and form of the gospels.

We also understand that since the writing is during this time, scholars say that the community is the Christians in Rome living under Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome. This would be a good reason for Mark's suffering and an example of what it means to be a disciple. If they were experiencing persecution, this message of hope in who Jesus is and what disciples do to continue Jesus' mission would help them live under such persecution. We must also point out that other opinions differ here. They believe that since the writing was written after Nero's persecution, the writer is not speaking to the persecuted people.[2]

As we look at the Gospel, we will examine what type of document the Gospel is. I intend to present the Christology of Jesus front and center to the reader. Why is this important to accomplish my goal, and how does this influence how Mark 1:16-20 speaks to the faith community? As we look at the form and structure of the Gospel, it will enlighten the dialog on discipleship from the text, and its connection with the project is deeply connected.

I will continue the dialogue and dive into Jesus' call to discipleship. Why was it so impactful? Does Mark's writer give us a view of what mattered in the call? I will continue

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[1] F. F. Bruce, ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 17.

[2] John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2013), 886-887, ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3052723.

the dialog by exploring the men's response to the call. Why did they respond the way they did? Is it because they are special, or is this response for all humanity? I will take the dialogue to look at the calling of 1 Kings 19:19-21, the call of Elisha by Elijah.[3] Are there similarities that can further engage in the dialogue of the chosen text? Mark clarifies that Jesus is the Messiah, and his eschatological mission is clear. This narrative continues the first fifteen verses that establish the Christology throughout Mark's Gospel. This is central to the purpose of the Gospel, which is that Jesus will be proclaimed, and the disciples are called to help proclaim this message. This brings the next theme in the scripture, which is discipleship.

The last theme is who can be called. We will explore the men who were called and whether this determines who can be called to be a disciple of Jesus. Is it exclusive or inclusive? Can we determine from this scripture or not?

Mark 1:16-20 is the calling of Jesus' disciples and all the implications that follow. It helped to inform my project because we call men to ministry into an authentic relationship with Jesus within a community of men on one accord. Jesus' calling to discipleship is a model that informed my project, so understanding all the elements of the call and the response to the call were crucial to the development of a program that will impact the men to become more involved in the church's ministry.

Let us examine the Gospel of Mark, starting with who and when the book was authored. Ancient tradition identifies John Mark as the author of the Gospel.[4] William Lane states, "The central question in inquiring about the tradition concerning the origin of

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[3] Adela Yarbro Collins, "Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible," in *Mark: A Commentary,* Harold W Attridge, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 156.

[4] Barton and Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 886.

Mark is whether the witness of the Gospel is essentially apostolic. An unbroken tradition affirms that the evangelist was intimately associated with the apostle Peter and that the contents of this Gospel depend significantly upon the message he proclaimed."[5] Lane established the authority by using references from Papias writings that trace back to the second century on the character and authority of Mark and his connection with Peter.[6] To further support the fact that Peter is the source of the Gospel, Lanes compares key scriptures in Mark to Acts 10:36-41 to show parallels between Peter's sermons preached in Acts and the structure and outline in Mark.[7] This provides the first point of credibility to Mark's Gospel in that John Mark was a witness to Peter's preaching and to Peter's experience and time with Jesus. Because of his connection to Peter, some scholars refer to this Gospel as a witness document. Lane states, "It is therefore appropriate to label Mark a witness document since it found it creative impulse in the early apostolic preaching of salvation through Jesus Christ."[8] As we can see, William Lane is convinced that there is a solid connection to Peter; C.M. Tucker takes the following position: "The link alleged between Mark's gospel and Peter is probably part of a second century attempt to give the Gospel more status by linking it with the leading apostle."[9] We can see the two scholars disagree on the connection to Peter, but let's examine the community Mark was speaking to.

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[5] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 7.

[6] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 8-9.

[7] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 10-12.

[8] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 1.

[9] Barton and Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary,* 886-887.

The community this Gospel speaks to has experienced suffering for the sake of the Gospel message. They have been discriminated against and persecuted just because they believe in Jesus. The point many scholars wrestle with is exactly which community they are. We see the point of contention between Lane and Tuckett, the community Mark is writing to. Lane is firm that Mark is writing to Christian Romans who have experienced persecution under Emperor Nero's rule.[10] Yet, Tucker says that the writer wrote the Gospel after 70 CE, and his writing is looking at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.[11] They see that Mark is stressing the topic of suffering to the reader. He uses suffering to make connections to discipleship and who Jesus is to the reader. Lane believes it is a suffering community, and Tucker is saying it is unclear, but he may want the community he is speaking to understand the suffering that may come to them.[12] Both scholars agree on the message of suffering the group or community is experiencing or will experience suffering on behalf of Jesus. This witness document encourages a community during times of suffering that have occurred or the suffering that will come because of their faith.

African American men have been experiencing systematic discrimination against them. They are faced with this oppression from the day they are born. We can encourage them that their suffering is part of their transformation, and they are on a journey of transformation, but they must do it in community together as the apostles did with Jesus. This shifts the perception of the men in my context to the duty to come to church to be

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[10] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 17.

[11] Barton and Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary,* 886-887.

[12] Barton and Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary,* 886-887.

the church. We also gain insight into when the author penned the Gospel, which we see was written around 70 CE. This places this Gospel as being written before the other synoptic Gospels. If Mark is the first, this writing establishes the Gospel as a genre of writing, for it is the earliest written document of Jesus and his ministry.

As we look further into the genre the Gospel takes, we see different opinions as we review this aspect of the Gospel. Tuckett finds it unusual to refer to the writing as Gospel and does not see any valid account of the life and ministry of Jesus. The text of Mark does not exhibit any of the features of biography, like personality, psychological development, origins, or education.[13] Lane has an entirely different view. He states, "The account Mark drew up is characterized by simplicity and straightforwardness. His language and style are less elaborate and more popular than that adopted by Matthew or Luke."[14] Mark's writing style was vivid and bold, and he provided details in some narratives and not much in others, but he offered more details than the other Gospels provided. Yet others have called his writing barbarous or unrefined.[15] As we see the different views, not only Mark can be considered a Gospel because of what it lacks as opposed to the other Gospels. The point is that the writing is not as eloquent but possibly barbaric in nature. This is further evidence that Mark is the original, and the rest came after. I would say that Mark was used as a source for the other Gospel writers, and they provided additional context for their target communities.

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[13] Barton and Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary,* 886-887.

[14] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 26.

[15] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 26.

As we have established Mark as the original Gospel, it is important to examine the purpose and goal in writing it. John Mark was to strengthen the faith of a community living through uncertain times as Christians were being persecuted and killed. Mark's approach to strengthening was to present Jesus as the Christ in the fullness of his divinity and world-ending mission, and to define what Christian discipleship requires of us to follow Jesus. To accomplish this, Mark focuses on proclamation from the beginning and throughout the Gospel to ensure the reader does not miss the point he is making. Lane states, “Mark's purpose was to project Christian faith in a climate of uncertainty where martyrdom has become a reality.”[16] His position is that Mark was providing a word for the present about a living Lord that could be heard and known.[17] As we can see, this aligns with the fact that a community is suffering because of being followers of Jesus. Yet, we further confirm this theme of suffering in Tucker's writing. Tucker states that “Mark does want the reader to understand suffering, but he does not say anything positive about suffering. He does stress the centrality of the cross and the nature of Christian discipleship.”[18] Here, Tucker aligns with Lane, but he further considers the cross's centrality and Christian discipleship. To a community under attack because of their faith, to understand that suffering is part of the disciple’s life and that it is alright because of the one you are following and his purpose. This becomes an encouragement to this community.

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[16] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament,* 25.

[17] Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 25-26.

[18] Barton and Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary,* 886-887.

Men within my context are missing the familial connection between other men, which is deep in intimacy and significant in size and complexity. This is what is required to provide support for the men in my context. True discipleship will provide this if they understand what discipleship means.

Look at the text in Mark 1:16-20; we can begin to review this model of calling people into discipleship. As we look at verse sixteen, it reads, "As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen" (Mk. 1:16). This raises an important question: Why is Jesus walking on the shore of Galilee? Why is he not walking in Nazareth, where he was born? Why by the shore of the Sea of Galilee?

This exploration takes us back to verses fourteen and fifteen. Upon closer inspection of these verses, we see that Jesus left the wilderness entered Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God. What caused Jesus to leave home, and why Galilee? Was it the news of John's incarceration? Was there fear of being implicated with John by association? I am sure there could be many, but R.T. France brings another perspective and rationale for Jesus' move to light. France says:

> Jesus made his base in the lakeside town of Capernaum. Despite his title (10:47; 14:67; 16:6), he does not seem to have spent much time in Nazareth. As a small village in the hills Nazareth offered minimal scope for proclamation of the good news, whereas the lake, with its prosperous fishing industry and an active trade route running through Capernaum to the neighbouring tetrarchy of Philip, was the focus of the province's life. It is striking, however, that there is no record of Jesus ever visiting the two Hellenistic cities which dominated the province politically, Sepphoris (just four miles from Nazareth) and Tiberias (not far down the lakeshore from Capernaum). It was among the more traditionally Jewish population of the lakeshore that Jesus sought, and found, a response to his message of the kingdom of God.[19]

[19] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Lisle, IL: William B. Eerdmans, Paternoster Press, 2002), 95.

Suppose your mission is to proclaim the Gospel of God's coming kingdom. You need to be where God's people would be in abundance, and the word of your proclamation would travel through the known world by the trade route. There was no better place than Galilee.

We also see in these same verses how John Mark connects and ties the Gospel message of God and Jesus into an excellent picture of anticipated redemption, and Jesus is the one whom God has sent to herald this transitional message to God's people. We also see how Mark builds the link between the Gospel message and God, and simultaneously presents Jesus as the good news, creating tension for the reader.[20] Jesus went to where the Jewish population would be thriving, and Galilee, with its thriving fishing industry, was the perfect place to begin Jesus' ministry through the proclamation of the Gospel message.

We now know why he was walking along the shore; the fishing industry was thriving, and many men would be found there. These texts are the precursors to what follows in our chosen text. We can examine Jesus' call by looking at verses sixteen and twenty. In both verses, Jesus calls two brothers to follow him. If we look at the calling, key things happen in both. The first is Jesus in motion and approaching the men. The second is that Jesus sees them, and the third is that Jesus calls them by saying, "Follow me." Yet there is a fourth thing he says, but it is recorded with the first call and not the second call. He states, "I will make you fishers of men." This is the promise Jesus offers to all who would be his disciples. Yes, it is not recorded for the second call; we must assume it was provided on both calls.

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[20] Ira Brent Driggers, *Following God Through Mark: Theological Tension in the Second Gospel,* first ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 17.

The men in my context are looking to be acknowledged and feel seen. They are dismissed or fighting to ensure they are recognized and valued. We must acknowledge and celebrate them, so they feel valued and know they are essential community members. Jesus sees Simon and Andrew casting their nets from the shore. In other words, they are applying their trade as fishermen. "'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him" (Mk. 1:17). In verse twenty, Jesus presents the same call to James and John. What is it about the call of Jesus? Why is there such confidence and surety in calling them into his new community of disciples? John Mark has done an excellent setup in verses one through fifteen, but should we expect these four men to be aware of all the last fifteen verses? I would say no, not all the previous fifteen verses, but they are aware of the fourteen and fifteen verses of the text. This is the reason why Jesus came to Galilee. To reach the largest number of Jewish people and to have the word spread. I am sure that Jesus' Proclamation in Galilee was at the top of everyone's mind during their discussions at work. So, I believe it was based on hearing the message, whether in person or by word
of mouth.

Jesus' call was not typical for his day; most disciples would choose and follow their teacher. Jesus is calling, and this confirms that he is not a teacher, at minimum, a prophet, but we learn he is so much more. Suppose we were to compare this call to another similar call. I would look to Elijah's call to Elisha in 1 Kings 19:19. C.S. Keener states, "Disciples usually sought out their own teachers. Only the most radical teachers called their own disciples (e.g., 1 Kgs. 19:19)."[21] Keener refers to Elisha's call by Elijah.

[21] C. S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, second ed. (Lisle, IL: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 131.

When Elisha was working in the fields, Elijah called him, and he left his work and followed him. There are not many call stories like this, and this is not the call of a teacher or rabbi. It is a prophet's call and his disciple's response to the call.

Jesus was not a teacher or rabbi but the Messiah. As readers, we know this fact because of the Gospel's introduction. Still, the characters in the narrative do not know for sure until Peter's declaration in verse 8:29 on Jesus' identity.[22] This means that in verse sixteen, Peter does not know that Jesus is the Messiah.

D. Mangum gives us further insight into the next aspect of Jesus' calling. He discusses Jesus' authority and how it was demonstrated in the call. Mangum states, "Jesus' authority is shown in that he commands Simon and Andrew to follow him and promises to make them fishers of people. Jesus uses their trade as a metaphor for their new calling as missionaries."[23] We are clear that there is an authority associated with Jesus' call, which is a divine authority. Where does this authority come from? Well, we see further confirmation of this position from Eckhard Schnabel. He makes the same assertions in his writing. He says, "Jesus summons the two fishermen: Come, follow me. Jesus' call underlines his authority, which demands an immediate response, and it also provides a clue to his identity: It is only God who can command people to leave their profession with which they earn their livelihood in order to be devoted to his service."[24] Schnabel uses the tribe of Levi as his support, for they did not take part in the land but

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[22] Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *The Journal of Religion* 57, no. 4 (1977): 400, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1201763.

[23] D. Mangum, ed., *Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament* (Lanham, MD: Lexham Press, 2020), Mk 1:16–20.

[24] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Lisle, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 72-73, ProQuest Ebook Central.

were appointed to serve in the tabernacle.[25] For this authority to come from God, there must have been some foreknowledge for the men to respond immediately as they did. We say that the authority is from God, but how do we know what was known so that the authority would be recognized?

We hear that the mission from God moves people to sacrifice and act in response to the promise that God will do a new thing. We see the same in Jesus' call to the disciples. The writer has set up the reader through Mark 1:1-15 to establish Jesus's Christology and eschatological mission as the foundation of his call to discipleship. This resonates with Mark's readers, but I believe the Galilean proclamations spread from the town of Capernaum into the larger community. Suzanne Henderson states a similar view. She says:

> Yet, as we shall see, Mark's redactional placement and handling of the traditional account clearly relate its claims about discipleship to Jesus' own Christological mission as depicted in Mk. 1:1-15. Only after tracing out the contours of Jesus' identity and purpose as sketched in these opening verses (Mark's Christology) are we positioned to examine the gospel's first glimpse of discipleship, in which Jesus deliberately summons others to join the ranks of his own apocalyptic regime (discipleship).[26]

Henderson affirms this position of foreknowledge of Jesus and the divine purpose. Yet other scholars think differently. Scholars like Ira Driggers state:

> Mark matter-of-factly describes only the call of Jesus and the following of the fishermen. Altogether absent is any form of verbal exchange (aside from Jesus' summons) that suggests the fishermen's motivation, much less any direct window into their collective state of mind. To bring even the most basic element of coherence to the narrative, hearers must therefore supply the explanation that the discourse omits. They must appeal to what Mark does not actually say.[27]

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[25] Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 73.

[26] Suzanne Watts Henderson, "The Calling of the Fishers in Mark 1:16–20," in *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark: Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32-33.

[27] Driggers, *Following God Through Mark*, 22.

Driggers highlights the writer's lack of calling out the state of mind and level of knowledge, but, given the writer's simplistic style, we can infer that the men knew because of the proclamation in verses fourteen and fifteen. This is unlike the action the writer of Luke takes in Luke 5:1-12, where Luke builds a discourse to reflect the disciples' state of mind and experiences leading up to Jesus's call.[28]

Just because the writer does not explicitly call out the state of mind in the text does not mean he has not called it out in other texts, so that the reader will be informed. John Mark has connected verses fourteen and fifteen scenes into verses sixteen through twenty and beyond through this discipleship narrative. They are the links between the introduction of the Gospel and the call of the four disciples. Jesus' proclamation at Galilee creates the bridge and the material for the reader to supply the discourse missing in sixteen through twenty. Suzanne Watts Henderson states the following: "Even these rather minor narrative links between the two scenes indicate that, for Mark, Jesus' recruitment of the fishers constitutes an inaugural-and thus momentous-step in his enactment of God's dominion, which Mark begins to stage in Galilee."[29] Henderson affirms the link between the scenes and brings it to the following perspective. As we have established, Jesus has made his purpose and mission clear, tied to Jewish prophecy and hope. It becomes easy to see how an oppressed people are looking for God to deliver them and restore Israel. How would they be attracted to Jesus and his call to discipleship to help carry the message to the rest of the people? Henderson says, "Jesus enters the public domain announcing a message of God's approaching reign; in turn, he follows this

[28] Driggers, *Following God through Mark*, 22.

[29] Henderson, "The Calling of the Fishers in Mark 1:16–20," 50.

"gospel" proclamation with an apocalyptic summons to radical reorientation of human life."[30] This is what has informed the authority Jesus exercises in his calling to the men, and the response of the four men gives us a view into what is required to become and be a disciple of Jesus.

Now, if we look at the response of the men to the call to discipleship. In verse eighteen of the text, we see that their decision is immediate and definitive. Donahue and Harrington further affirm this call by saying, "There is no hesitation or reflection on the disciples' part. The verb "threw aside" (literally "leaving", Greek aphentes) foreshadows the command to disciples to leave all to follow Jesus (10:28-29)."[31] Witherington further supports this, yet he also raises an additional insight here. He states, "The text says they responded "immediately" to the summons, and commentators have often speculated whether this suggests the authoritativeness of Jesus' summons or whether, as John 3-4 may suggest, they had known something of Jesus' message and methods prior to this summons."[32] These scholars agree on the immediacy of their response to the call but differ on men's motivation behind their response. I believe all four men had foreknowledge of Jesus and his mission, as stated earlier, because of his initial proclamation at Galilee. If they knew of him and his purpose, then they recognized his authority in his call and responded that they had decided to follow.

Whether it is implicitly or explicitly expressed in the text, to have such a response of faith requires some knowledge as a basis for hope; you must know what you have

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[30] Henderson, "The Calling of the Fishers in Mark 1:16–20," 50.

[31] John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: the Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 84-85, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[32] Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2001), 85.

hoped for. How great was their faith in Jesus and his mission? All four men left their trade to follow Jesus. They left their thriving fishing business and followed Jesus. Do not forget they also left their families behind to follow Jesus. During this time, your profession was a part of your identity within the Jewish community. So, they walked away from family and religious traditions to follow Jesus.

If we note how the people respond to Jesus after he does miracles and speaks with authority in Mark 6:3. They say, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him" (Mk. 6:3). Their professions and families define them as people and inform their roles within the Jewish community. So, when they left, they left their identity and community; better put, they left all to follow Jesus. This is the price of discipleship. How do we know they left their identity behind? Look at what they left behind. In verse eighteen, the writer makes clear by stating, "And immediately they left their nets and followed him" (Mk. 1:18). In James and John's responses, the writer is evident in this statement: "Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him" (Mk. 1:20). They gave up their current lives to answer the call to serve as Jesus' disciples and to carry out his mission.

This leads me to ask what type of men these four men are. What were the criteria for calling them to discipleship? What are the qualifications for calling his first disciples? Well, according to D. L. McKenna and L. J. Oglive, "Those who answer are asked to be trustworthy, teachable, and task-oriented."[33] We see the trustworthy because he asks them to leave behind everything and "Follow Me." McKenna and Oglive clarify the other

[33] D. L. McKenna and L. J. Ogilvie, *The Preacher's Commentary. Vol. 25: Mark* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982), 45.

qualification by stating, “Jesus also chooses *teachable* men. When He calls, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” He promises a lifelong learning and growth process.”[34] These are not highly educated men. They are learning what they need to know for day-to-day living as fishermen. Jesus promises to become something new by just being with him. Why does he choose uneducated men? McKenna and Oglive wrote, “Not by accident, He chooses unschooled and unsophisticated fishermen. What a miserable start for world evangelization. We must never forget that Jesus knows what He is doing. He wants teachable men without intellectual preconceptions or cultural mindsets that will be insurmountable barriers to truth.”[35] We see this concept of following and learning throughout Jesus's ministry. Other scholars like A. Black writes, “As far as discipleship is concerned, we learn that discipleship involves ‘following,’ a concept repeated throughout Mark.”[36] We learn that following may involve leaving something as important as one’s occupation. We learn that following leads to becoming another kind of fisherman, one who fishes for people.[37]

Finally, the men must be task-oriented. What McKenna and Oglive mean by his phrase is that “Jesus knows the skills that are required to catch fish, and He does not hesitate to liken them to the skills of catching men. Fishing of both kinds is a science and an art. Without the discipline of learned skills and the intuition of natural gifts, the net

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[34] McKenna and Ogilvie, *The Preacher’s Commentary*, 45.

[35] McKenna and Ogilvie, *The Preacher’s Commentary*, 46.

[36] E.g., Mark 1:20; 2:14; 8:34; 10:21. Most of the occurrences of “following” in Mark (other than 1:17, 20) use the word ἀκολουθέω (*akoloutheō*), which is used both for following in the metaphorical sense (following Jesus’ teaching and example) and for following in a purely literal sense (e.g., Mark 3:7; 5:24). It is interesting that the metaphorical use of “following Jesus” as a way of defining what it means to be a disciple is not found in the New Testament outside of the Gospels.

[37] A. Black, *Mark* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), Mk. 1:16-18.

will come up empty."[38] They knew the tasks of fishing and the art. They understood what it meant to be successful or to fail. The difference was a matter of eating or not eating. So, they perfected their craft in fishing, and the same skills could be used to become fishers of men if they followed Jesus and learned by his example.

In verse seventeen, he calls Peter and Andrew, who are lower to middle-class fishermen, compared to James and John, who were from a wealthy fishing family. Donahue and Harrington clarify this by stating, "James and John are portrayed as being at a higher economic level than Peter and Andrew. The latter are fishing basically from the shore with leaded nets, Whereas the former possess a boat and have hired workers."[39] For Jesus, there was no economic requirement to be called to discipleship. It was open to all men so long as you were trustworthy, teachable, and task oriented.

This leads us to the conclusion that Jesus was beginning to build a new community with a worldview aligned with his mission's proclamation. Brendan Byrne sees the importance of this action. He writes, "Instead, this is delayed for a moment (until 1:21-28) while he turns aside to call four disciples. The fact that right from the start he builds a community around himself sends a powerful signal that discipleship and life in community will be central to this story."[40] This community is based on familial relationships, for as we look at the four men, they are two pairs of brothers who have familial ties to each other and now will have similar relations with each other, Jesus, and God. This is the foundation of the Christian faith and establishes how we grow by

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[38] McKenna and Ogilvie, *The Preacher's Commentary*, 46.

[39] Donahue and Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, 86.

[40] Brendan Byrne, *A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 47, ProQuest Ebook Central.

teaching in the community. At this moment, Jesus truly begins his ministry by founding a new community of disciples, promising transformation. As Byrne writes, "Jesus sees four men pursuing their usual occupation as fishers of fish. Beneath and beyond this, but in symbolic continuity with it, he sees a deeper vocational possibility: fisher of fish can become fishers of people for the Kingdom. Along with continuity, there will also be a transformation that he will work."[41]

Discipleship is not something you ask to be part of. You are called into this intimate relationship, unlike other relationships, like the teacher-disciple relationship, in which the disciple comes requesting to be a disciple. Jesus is calling all of humanity into a relationship within his community, where we can all learn how to be like him. The price of answering the call is to sacrifice our lives to walk into a new way of living and being. Why would anyone answer such a call and give so much to follow Jesus? What compels a person to give up all?

Discipleship is the journey and process that Jesus has been calling all of humanity to be a part of the becoming, and all must go through to fulfill the purpose of God for our lives. The author of Mark lifts the criteria and requirements for entering discipleship under Jesus. We see the criteria laid out, and you must receive a call to discipleship. Once you know who he is and his mission. He will call you or, for another, invite you into discipleship.

We see that discipleship is membership into a new community that differs from what you have lived. It is a community whose foundation relationships are familial and whose purpose is divine in its assignment. The community offers transformation if you

[41] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 47.

can walk away from it and the profession of your current life. Why is this required? Here, we see that the cost of discipleship is giving up your life for Jesus.

In this new community, all the disciples have things in common. They support each other, fail together, and rise together. This process of becoming fishers of humanity reveals the disciples' shortfalls, yet Jesus will continue with them, and they will be with Jesus. Why do Jesus and the disciples hang in with each other? Jesus made a promise to make them “fishers of men.” He was committed to the transformation process, and the disciples were committed even when it did not feel good to learn about their shortcomings and figure out how to overcome them to continue the journey of becoming.

This study of Mark 1:16-20 was foundational to my project as the crucial aspect is the calling of men to be fully engaged in church ministry. This model of Jesus calls disciples to his purpose of spreading the Gospel and to begin becoming fishers of men. This process has entry criteria to start and a reason for continuing, leading to becoming the instrument for God’s glory.

We see that there needs to be knowledge of Jesus and his purpose towards humanity. Once the purpose is confirmed, we have the call, which is not about pulsative but about God's divine authority that resonates with all humanity. As God is loving, He gives us the choice to make if we will respond. In Mark, the appropriate response is immediate and without question, yes. They give up their current life to start the process of transformation. Mark makes the case that there is no question or debate in answering the call of Jesus to discipleship. You get up and go.

The text supports the idea that discipleship tailored to men of all ages will give them a community that shows they are supported and encourages them to join. Yet it

takes a group of men to be foundational, setting the tone for ministry growth by becoming fishers of men. This creates sacred safe spaces for men to be their authentic selves and build community. This allows men to do life together and begin to transform into what God has called them to be. In the next chapter, we will review the historical foundation and how the life of the person defined the communal framework of the project, and why it was foundational to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

As we begin our review of the historical foundations, let's restate the problem statement and hypothesis to ensure the framework. The problem statement is the following: the men's ministry at Shiloh Baptist, located at 515 W. 4th St. in Plainfield, New Jersey, is experiencing low participation despite significant overall membership growth. This problem stems from the fact that the current men's ministry model has not changed with the overall church transformation. It does not support the intercultural ministry outreach that is required for the ministry to grow. The hypothesis is the following: If the men of Shiloh participate in a discipleship class focused on mentorship training, then they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members. This will transform the ministry model from a leadership model based on the ministry leader to a team-oriented leadership model equipped to reach all men across all cultural spaces, revitalizing men's engagement in the ministry.

Reverend Lemuel Haynes was the first African American man ordained in the United States. His life exemplifies what is required to nurture and grow as an African American man in a hostile society. In this discussion, we will explore his life to see how he could know God and himself despite being born into rejection and disadvantage. This

enabled him to fulfill his calling from God and impact the fledgling nation and the world after being hidden and nurtured until he stepped onto the stage of life.

We will explore his life and draw parallels to the challenges men face today. These examples demonstrate how he navigated and integrated life experiences into his identity as a man in a world that did not value African men. We will observe how these experiences occur in communities and mentoring relationships that contributed to his personal growth, understanding of his faith, and acceptance of his identity as an African man in a white-dominated world. This was the foundation that empowered Lemuel to become a significant person in history.

After this discussion, we will explore potential ways to assist men who are facing similar pressures and challenges stemming from oppression and discrimination in our current society. These methods will form the foundation for addressing the issue of Christian men not engaging with the church despite its growth. Our aim is to establish environments that promote healing, personal development, and redemption for men, helping them recognize their value in God's eyes. If men are valued by God, they are also valuable to the world, their communities, and their families. This will help restore their sense of self-worth within the community.

Lemuel's Background

Lemuel Haynes was born on July 18th, 1753, in West Hartford, Connecticut. His father was an unnamed African man, and his mother was considered a white woman of respectable ancestry in New England. They abandoned him at the home of a man whose last name was Haynes. Legend has it that Lemuel was given the last name of the man

who hosted his mother during his birth to inflict revenge on him.[1] Lemuel was sold to Deacon David Rose five months later and served as an indentured servant until age twenty-one. Deacon Rose then took Lemuel to live in Middle Granville, where he spent the next thirty-two years.[2]

Lemuel's life with the Rose family was crucial to his upbringing.[3] David Rose's wife, Elizabeth Rose, unconditionally loved Lemuel and raised him as if he were one of her own children. She ensured he had the same opportunities to attend the village schools unless his work took him away. To make up for the lost time, she ensured he had access to books, which he used to teach himself. The family's devotion and weekly church attendance were crucial to his faith development, leading him to become a committed Christian at a young age.

Lemuel's theological and political thinking was shaped by his early experience of indentured servitude and his belief that God calls all men to be free. Not living as such is sinful. His preaching aligned with these theological and political mindsets.

In Granville, at the Rose household, Lemuel continued pursuing a theological education. He was accepted to Dartmouth College but declined the offer to study Latin and Greek under two area pastors. In November 1780, Haynes was offered and accepted a position at an all-White congregation in Greenville, Massachusetts, and preached his

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[1] John Saillant and John Saillant, *Black Puritan, Black Republican: The Life and Thought of Lemuel Haynes, 1753-1833* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2002), 10, ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3051852.

[2] Timothy Mather Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes, A.M., For Many Years Pastor of a Church in Rutland, VT., and Late in Granville* (New York, NY: Harper, 1837), 28-29.

[3] Ruth Bogin, "'Liberty Further Extended:' A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript by Lemuel Haynes," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (January 1983): 85–105, doi:10.2307/1919529.

first public sermon. This led to Lemuel's ordainment five years later as a minister, and he became the pastor of the First Congregational Church in Torrington, Connecticut.[4]

Lemuel's preaching was well-known and spread throughout the state. His ministry resulted in two significant changes. First, he married Elizabeth Babbit three years after becoming the pastor, and they had ten children. Second, he was called to serve as pastor at a church in Rutland, Vermont. Lemuel served as the pastor of the Vermont Church for thirty years, and his sermons constantly challenged the social attitudes of his day. Lemuel's theology held that the Abrahamic covenant was broken when he exiled Ishmael and Hagar. He equated this act with White Americans' hostility to the Black people among them. The restoration of the covenant, he believed, was possible in post-Revolutionary America. Haynes promoted unity in politics, in society, and in the covenant, and in the faith, theology, and hermeneutics, as the cure for slavery and the essence of a post-slavery society in a time when Americans, including African Americans, were adjusting to the forces of unity and the forces of difference in their nation."[5] Lemuel's ministry reflected his deep awareness of the human condition and the importance of the freedom of all humanity.

Context of His Servitude

Lemual's extraordinary life can be better understood by examining the context in which he lived. We will explore various aspects of his time and how they shaped his life. Initially, we will delve into the practice of indentured servitude and its prevalence in

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[4] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 71-72.

[5] Saillant and Saillant, *Black Puritan, Black Republican,* 7.

colonial life during that historical period. From the 1700s to the 1800s, servitude was commonplace in the colonies due to the demand for labor in the early years of colonial settlement.

During this time, there were three types of servitude: apprenticeship, indentured service, and slavery. Slavery involved purchasing a person for their entire life until death. This was not desirable in the North due to the higher demand for skilled labor and the high cost of enslaving a person, which early settlers could not afford. In the North, the preferred options were indentured servitude and apprenticeship.

In numerous accounts of Lemuel, it is noted that he was sold into indentured servitude at the age of five months. As we delve into the history of servitude in the colonies, it becomes apparent that there is a distinction that needs to be clarified regarding what happened to Lemuel. Indentured servitude was a contract used to pay for passage from European countries to the colonies, and it was typically utilized with adults. The exception for children occurred when families migrated together, which was often the case with German immigrants, or when the adults had limited options upon arriving in the colonies.

The other option was apprenticeship. Most of the apprentices were young adults, mainly boys learning a trade. This option was also available for orphaned and abandoned children, ensuring they would be cared for and raised to have a trade. Children under this option were under contract until the age of twenty-one when they were guaranteed a basic education and a trade.[6] In Massachusetts, laws were passed to ensure that owners provided education, and if they did not, the apprentice could be released from the

[6] Mark R. Snyder, "The Education of Indentured Servants in Colonial America," *Journal of Technology Studies* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 65–72, doi:10.21061/jots.v33i2.a.1.

contract. This was the contract Lemuel was under, so it was not servitude as an indentured servant but an apprenticeship to become a farmer under the guidance of Deacon David Rose and his family in Middle Granville, Massachusetts.[7]

During his apprenticeship, Lemuel resided in a retreat within the expansive world, which he would not be able to afford if it were not for the Rose household. In the words of author Cooley, these were his formative years, during which he could develop and mature until God called him to ministry. He spent his childhood in a new settlement established by the Puritan community in the Massachusetts mountains. Although he was embraced as part of the community, he still felt like an outsider. During this time of protection, he thrived in the Rose household.

His Hidden Years

Deacon David Rose was the first settler in the Middle Granville area. His land was a forest area that had to be turned into farmland. His move from Connecticut to settle the new land in Middle Granville resulted in thirty-two people emigrating from Durham, Connecticut, to establish the village of Middle Granville and settle their families. Deacon Rose needed help clearing the land and being a practical agriculturalist or farmer. In return for his service, Lemuel was provided with all the necessities of life, including his education, religious instruction, and learning of his trade as a farmer.[8] The individuals were all part of the same church congregation in Connecticut. In this setting, five-month-old Lemuel Haynes became a member of the Rose family. Lemuel was embraced as part

[7] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes,* 31.

[8] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes,* 35-38.

of the family due to Mrs. Elizabeth Rose's unconditional love for him, treating him as one of her children.

Mrs. Elizabeth Rose was a significant influence in Lemuel's early life. She loved him as if he were her own child, supported his growth, and integrated him fully into the family. She provided him with the maternal love that his birth mother had denied him, allowing him to experience the true love between a mother and child.

As a mother, she ensured that her son was raised with strong religious teachings and supported his education. Whenever he needed books, she ensured that he had access to them. Even when Deacon Rose decided to stop attending the first church in Granville, Mrs. Rose continued to go, and Lemuel would take her to church every week.

The Rose family was deeply committed to their religious practices, which included daily prayer, honoring the Sabbath, and having family religious instruction the evening before the Sabbath. This routine was a fundamental part of their lives in Middle Granville village. On the Sabbath, the family attended the First Church of Middle Granville, where Lemuel listened to the weekly sermon preached by the minister.

The family held a devotion every Saturday evening, during which they received biblical instruction. Once Lemuel was able to read, he read one of the sermons by the preachers that was published every week. Despite starting work as a farmer, Lemuel continued to pursue knowledge and tried to learn something new every day.

This religious education played a crucial role in Lemuel's faith development, reliance on God, and character shaping. In the Rose household, Lemuel found a sanctuary from the outside world, where he received love, nurture, and guidance until he was ready

to embrace the challenges of the wider world. In this environment, he was taught the values of a pious and hard-working life and the significance of diligent work and faithful service.[9]

As per the contract of servitude, Lemuel was afforded the same education as the children of Middle Granville, along with his training in running a farm from Deacon David Rose. Lemuel's education was the same as his peers, unless his work required him to work as a farmer. One of the crucial things he learned was the ability to read and write. This education and his religious instruction formed an excellent basis for him to continue his education, as work later in his childhood interfered with school. Lemuel could be found sitting by the chimney, reading a book, so he could continue to learn different subjects. Many have remarked, "Lemuel Haynes got his education in the chimney corner." He had a process for his time of learning. When asked how useful he was in his studies, Lemuel said, "I make it my rule to know something more every night than I knew in the morning."[10] He made sure that he improved himself every day, because he was not able to attend school like the other White children because his work in the fields to precedence over his ability to attend school. He took his education or his self-improvement into his own hands. He was self-taught and was disciplined to learn something every day.

Lemuel's access to books was limited in a time when having a single book was a privilege due to its scarcity of books. He had the Bible, Psalter, spelling book, and one of two volumes of sermons available. This was the normal library that comprised most

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[9] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 30-31, 35.

[10] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes,* 37.

families. This was further highlighted by Lemuel's own words: "I was constantly inquiring after books, especially in theology. I was greatly pleased with the writings of Watts and Doddridge and with Young's Night Thoughts. My good master encouraged me in the matter."[11] In his own words, Deacon Rose encouraged Lemuel's reading and pursuit of learning theology, which was crucial to his mental and emotional development. Lemuel trained to be a farmer and worked for Deacon Rose. He was a skilled worker and eventually took on significant management responsibilities. He gained respect and recognition for his accomplishments and moral character. Mrs. Rose provided ongoing support for Lemuel's educational, social, and spiritual growth. She was a source of joy in his life and loved him deeply. Her passing in 1775 was deeply traumatic for Lemuel, as she meant everything to him as a mother figure. Where He says, "Soon after I came of age, God was pleased to take my mistress away, to my inexpressible sorrow. It caused me bitter mourning and lamentation."[12]

In 1774, he completed his servitude to David Rose and became free. His first act as a freeman was to enlist as a Minute Man and become part of the American Army.[13] This action expressed his belief that the freedom and independence that the colonies were pursuing were for all men, including African people. Like several other Black thinkers of his time, he was associated with Federalists' political thoughts. They were about freedom with their white colonial counterparts from England, and the separation of freedom. This mindset was shaped by his military service during the American Revolution.

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[11] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 38.

[12] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 40.

[13] Saillant and Saillant, *Black Puritan, Black Republican*, 5.

Lemuel continued to live with the Rose family even after his contracted service had ended up on reaching his twenty-first birthday. During this time, he became influenced by the era's political climate and developed a strong sense of patriotism. When the opportunity arose to form a militia to defend the new nation's freedom, Lemuel eagerly enlisted as a Minuteman in the local military. He saw this as a calling from God to fight for the nation's liberty and embraced the Revolutionary War beliefs, viewing it as a means to abolish slavery. Lemuel firmly believed in the equality of all men, guided by his interpretation of the scriptures.[14]

Lemuel served in the Minute Men unit for one year until the U.S. Army called them to support the war in 1775. Lemuel never saw actual action. Just before the unit was called to the front lines, he became sick and returned to Granville to recover. Yet this time influenced his worldview and sermons, as he wrote sermons while in military service.

After returning home, Lemuel continued writing sermons, and his proficiency in theology improved. One Saturday night, during the Rose family's religious instruction, Lemuel read one of his latest sermons at the request of Deacon David Rose. Deacon Rose was deeply engaged in the sermon and was impressed by its construction and writing. When he was asked who had written the sermon, Lemuel revealed that it was his work.

The Early Ministry of Lemuel

On a particular night, Lemuel's theological knowledge and understanding were revealed. As a result, he began his public ministry and was seen by his community as

[14] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 44-45.

being called to a higher purpose than ordinary life. The community recognized his talents and urged Lemuel to consider Christian ministry. In his own words, Lemuel provides some insight. One of his letters says, "I was solicited by some to obtain a collegiate education, with a view to the gospel ministry. A door was open for it at Dartmouth College, but I shrunk at the thought."[15]

Lemuel declined the invitation to Dartmouth College and instead chose to study Latin and Greek to read the scriptures in their original languages. His Latin teacher was Reverend Daniel Farrand of Canaan, Connecticut, and Reverend William Bradford was responsible for enrolling him in school and taught Lemuel Greek at the same time. After this period of learning, Lemuel sought a license to preach the Gospel on the advice of his peers in ministry. This occurred on November 29, 1780. After a thorough examination, Lemuel was licensed to preach the Gospel. Shortly after receiving his license, he was called to fill the pulpit of a new Congregational church in Granville, Massachusetts. He delivered his first public sermon in an all-White church, and the title of his sermon was "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." Lemuel served faithfully for five years, preaching and teaching. His inspirational preaching increased church attendance, and his teaching of the youth led many of them to the Lord. His sermons were eloquent yet understandable to the average person. His interactions with people of all ages left a lasting impression of piety and humility, always accompanied by biblical instruction.

Lemuel, well-known in his community since childhood, was publicly recognized as having the God-given gift to preach the Gospel. People from the community always gathered to hear him preach and teach. Despite being a Black man ministering to an all-

[15] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 60.

White community, God continued to bless his ministry, even though he was not officially appointed as the church pastor. One of the fruits of his ministry was Elizabeth Babbit, who came to know the Lord through his preaching and teaching. After accepting salvation, she offered her hand in marriage to Rev. Haynes. After praying and consulting with his friends and peers, who agreed, Rev. Haynes accepted her proposal. Rev. Lemuel Haynes married Elizabeth Babbit on September 22, 1783, in Hartland, Connecticut, by the Rev. Samuel.[16]

After serving his five years in the ministry at Granville, Lemuel was ordained. Timothy Cooley states, "The congregation applied to the Association of Ministers in Litchfield County, Connecticut, to ordain him."[17] The association ordained Lemuel Haynes shortly after applying on November 9, 1785.[18] Shortly after his ordination, Rev. Haynes was temporarily called to pastor a church in Torrington, Connecticut.

Torrington Pastorate

For two years, Rev. Haynes served as the temporary pastor at a church in Torrington, Connecticut. It is amazing that, within this short period, Rev. Haynes' preaching and teaching of the Gospel were so great that from week to week, service attendance grew until the church was filled. He gained the respect and admiration of many respectable families in the surrounding towns. He was especially appreciated by the Goshen supporters and friends who attended his services.

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[16] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 70.

[17] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 71.

[18] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 71.

Although Rev. Haynes was welcomed by many, he still had to face the ever-present racism of the day. There is the story of a man who opposed Rev. Haynes's appointment and stopped attending services. After some time, no doubt, more people went to the service. His curiosity overcame his prejudice.

The man decided to come to church to see what was happening but to disrespect Rev. Haynes by keeping his hat on. It is said that Rev. Haynes mounted the pulpit, read his scripture, and began preaching his sermon as if the man's offense was not even present. Rev. Haynes had not preached for too long when the man said to himself, "Before I thought him the whitest man I ever saw. My hat was instantly taken off and thrown under the seat and I found myself listening with the most profound attention."[19] This day was memorable in this man's life and the sermon for its piercing effects on his conscience. He received salvation from Jesus Christ and has been a faithful servant ever since.

This is one of several instances where Rev. Haynes's pastoral ministry touched people. Many have accepted and been enriched by his preaching and teaching. He was still viewed as a Black man with the stigma associated with being a Black man. Yet he continued to preach, teach, and minister to the congregation, and the surrounding community was the better for his time in Torrington.

This was not the first time Rev. Haynes faced such discrimination. Yet his calm and witty personality allowed him to respond without making others feel belittled or less than a person. Yet he learned these things during the hidden years of his youth back in Middle Granville under the Rose household. In Alicia Britt Chole's book *Anonymous*, she

[19] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 74.

speaks of Jesus hidden years that we do not think about when we say we want to be like Jesus. She makes this statement about what hidden meant for Jesus. She states, "As with a child in the womb and a seed in the ground, God's unanticipated move of hiding Jesus granted him protected, undisturbed room to be and become. From God's perspective, anonymous seasons are sacred spaces. They are quite literally formative; to be rested in, not rushed through—and most definitely never to be regretted. Unapplauded, but not unproductive: hidden years are the surprising birthplace of true spiritual greatness."[20] It is during the hidden times of Lemuel's life that we see what I call sacred, safe spaces for him to rest, restore, and develop within community. It was his time spent in these spaces that helped to bring about Lemuel's transformation and provided him the time and environment to discover and strengthen his self-worth and identity.

His first space was his family and community within the village of Middle Granville. He was an integral part of the community that fostered the importance of God, strong work ethic and education. He excelled in all three because he was taught and supported by Deacon and Mrs. Rose. First, in the weekly family devotion and providing him with reading material in his self-education. This is followed by Deacon Rose acknowledging his gift for sermon development and ensuring Lemuel had the support of the local clergy to instruct and mentor him towards pastoral ministry.

We see throughout his ministry that his place of respite and comfort was with the Rose family and among his clergy peers who were ever the listening ears and confidantes. These relationships were crucial to the formation of his community,

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[20] Alicia Britt Chole, *Anonymous: Jesus' Hidden Years ... and Yours* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 13.

allowing him to have the sacred safe spaces necessary to develop, grow, and become who God called him to be.

Now, it was time for him to begin to be revealed, for the work of God was manifesting, and his first two assignments of Granville and Torrington were the beginning of his unveiling. The Rose homestead and Middle Granville community became his retreat so God could hide him until it was time for him to step out into the world for God's purpose. His ministry was being revealed as he kept preaching and teaching the Gospel.

Rutland Pastorate

Rev. Haynes served in Torrington for five years, but he was not accepted as the permanent pastor due to the community's racism. It was in Rutland that he found his calling to permanent pastoral ministry. On March 28, 1788, he went to Rutland, Vermont, to become the parish pastor in the newly settled village.[21] Rutland was situated on Otter Creek, and the west parish was home to an intelligent, industrious population who were on one accord about their desire for him to become their spiritual guide.[22] At this time in his life, he matured his theology and knowledge and developed a system of preaching and teaching. The people of Rutland enjoyed the fruits of his rich mind, which discussed divine science and merged it with the power of God. He was deeply committed to the ministry, which focuses on ministering to the people's salvation through Jesus Christ.

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[21] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 79.

[22] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 79.

He did not shrink from enriching his congregation with the system of divine truth, which he understood was developed throughout his life. He never wavered from his doctrine. He did not look to explore or investigate other doctrines. He asked three questions: "Is it true? Is it profitable? Is it seasonable?"[23] He probably set the example for pastors today by requiring his family to attend Sunday morning and afternoon services. He was known to respond to his family when they thought to miss a service the following: "If the devil can make one stay away in the forenoon, he is almost sure to detain him in the afternoon."[24] Rev. Haynes was well received, and like in Rutland, at one point in his ministry, there were two parishes, and he was always welcome in the other parish, but the young boys used to make what was called little fun about the West parish having a colored minister! His parish youth would respond with, "His soul is pure! – all white! Snow white!"[25] Here, it seems a little joke, but the color of his skin is still ever present even in a community that called in to be their pastor.

When Rev. Haynes came to Rutland, the congregation had forty-two members, most of whom were advanced in life. During his first year, twenty-six members joined who received salvation, and there have been few additions over the years. It was fifteen years later, in 1803, that he was about to give up ministry, as detailed in a letter to the pastor of the first congregational church in Granville, Connecticut.

He shares his frustration that his membership has only grown by thirty members after fifteen years. He speaks about how they keep prayer meetings once a week. The

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[23] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 79.

[24] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 81.

[25] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 81.

people's hearts were low, and the outlook did not look good. Suddenly, they held a service in November, and the church was packed. People are attentive and listening to Rev. Haynes's sermon. The word spread, and the next week, more people showed up, and each week, more and more people came to listen to the pastor's preaching. The people kept coming and filling up the homes within the village.[26]

This same year, Rev. Haynes' church grew by one hundred and three new members who had accepted salvation. In the neighboring town of Pittsford, one hundred and fifty accepted the gift of salvation by confession of faith. Rev. Haynes' ministry experienced growth again in 1808 when the church added one hundred and nine members. He witnessed his ministry's growth as he conducted revivals and was asked to run them for other pastors. The revivals were successful due to his preaching and unwavering commitment to Jesus Christ.

Rev. Haynes served at the Rutland church for thirty years. Toward the end of his ministry at Rutland, the political views started to create conflict as their political environment shifted and the federal government took shape. The conflict between federal and state rights was the topic of discussion and wrestling for the young nation.

Rev. Haynes, a federalist like his role model George Washington, spoke out against state rights overriding federal laws. He was very vocal in Vermont, where the issue was more about state rights not being taken away by the federal government. He created such conflict that he decided to leave, as many loved him, but just as many wanted him to leave. It was due to his firm conviction that was solidified in the service

[26] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 90-91.

during the war that led to his agreement to be dismissed from Rutland and go back to Granville to continue his ministry, responding to calls to preach, discourse on the Gospel message of salvation, and to speak to the immorality of slavery and the freedom of all men.

Rev. Haynes became famous throughout the United States and the world. His powerful sermons and intellect were a genius level, and he constantly challenged listeners to examine their thinking and reevaluate the condition of their souls. Are you ready to see the Lord? He lived and faced personal challenges, but it is safe to say He was a man who learned to grieve personal loss and trust in the Lord during it all. Rev Lemuel Haynes was the first African American to be ordained to the Gospel ministry and the first African American to be installed to pastor a White church. During his life, he experienced hidden years where God protected and nurtured him. In those hidden years, he developed as a man of God and learned the crucial things that allowed him to perform on the large stage. In the end, on September 28th, Rev. Lemuel Haynes passed away at three o'clock in the afternoon. He passed away, happy to be on his way to his reward in God.[27] A life well-lived and a testimony for all to follow.

Conclusion

Lemuel Haynes is an example of the potential within African American men who can recognize their potential through faith in God being integrated into their past experiences, whether good or traumatic. They can shape how men will engage their present and future. The assimilation of their experiences and faith in God will enable men

[27] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 309.

to discover their identity and their self-worth as men. This is crucial when living in a hostile society that has implemented a system of oppression and discrimination targeting the African American people and community.

We see this as Lemuel was part of a community grounded in mentorship. He was raised as a part of the Rose family. Deacon Rose mentored him, and he rose in his apprenticeship until he was running Deacon Rose's farming business with the larger community of Granville. Mrs. Rose ensured he was educated and loved him as one of her own children. Lemuel was part of the family, and as part of the family, he was included in its religious education, being tasked with reading the sermons published in the newspaper each week.

Jerome Stevenson states in his book *A Manual for Men Mentoring Men Pastoral Care through Male Mentoring for the African American Man* "Mentoring should be holistic in its approach with an objective of leading men to healthy relationship with God, other men and women."[28] We can see through Lemuel's home life that the Rose family provided a holistic approach to raising and mentoring him, which was foundational to his understanding of his own identity, even as an African in a predominantly white community. In the shaping of his identity and worldview, he embraced the political views of Deacon Rose and his community, as evidenced by his joining the local militia to fight in the Revolutionary War for freedom. This experience was his first documented expression of his belief that the freedom he was fighting for was for all people, not just white people.

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[28] Jerome P. Stevenson, *A Manual for Men Mentoring Men: Pastoral Care Through Male Mentoring for the African American Man* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2014), 171.

It is under this mentorship that his identity as an African Christian man was nurtured and guided to grow into the man God called him to be. It is within this system of indentured service that he was able to excel in his ability to work, learn, and build relationships that created community, making room for him to be his authentic self and answer the call to ministry. This ability to garner allyship with key people in his life provided a community of supporters and, in his endeavor to enter the ministry, a host of mentors to be his community in the hidden years of his life. This community of mentors allowed men to be their authentic selves, with all the challenges of living under an oppressive social system. It will provide support for men to push back against social stereotypes of African American men and explore and discover their identity as men.

Lemuel had a strong sense of self. This was evident in his drive to learn all he could every day of his life. We see this in his self-education at every moment of his day. We see this in his work ethic, where he worked hard and learned ethics. He worked hard and learned the work and the business so well that Deacon David Rose put the farm business in his hands.

This is important addressing the mindset of the men in this context. This sense of who they are in God counters the effect of the consistent oppression and discrimination in our current nation today. The ability to discover who God is calling you, no matter what the world says you are, is crucial for every man. It is in the naming of who you are as a person that nurtures the strength and confidence for every man to embrace their God given purpose.

If the men knew who God had named them, they would begin to pursue their purpose. They would start to engage with their world in godly ways. They would engage

not from a position of weakness but from one of power to challenge and transform systems through their relationships with other men.

Lemuel Haynes was a man who had the hand of God in his life. To ensure he would be born in Connecticut and brought to Granville, Massachusetts, to be hidden until his time, for when God would require him for ministry back in the land of his birth. This has similar parallels with Jesus, who was secreted away as a baby to Egypt until Herod was dead, and it was safe to return. Lemuel is an example for other African American men to see how important it is to be in community with other men for growth and support in facing life's challenges.

He was hidden a second time when he went to Rutland, Vermont, to the ministry field, where God was considered a missionary field at the time. He served for eighteen years in obscurity and experienced no growth within his church. He served faithfully, and suddenly, the church was packed in one service. This was again another hidden time for Lemuel. These hidden times were for his protection, the development of his craft, and for his intellect to spread the Gospel and build relationships that would foster and support this dedication and ministry to God. Lemuel was hiding for something great. He was hidden to prepare him for the ministry he was to perform in Granville. He had been hidden for twenty-four years before he started on his journey.

These hidden times in Lemuel's life are the examples and methodology I see as impacting men's participation in the church ministry and in my context. It was in those hidden spaces and times that Lemuel was growing for God's next assignment. It must be a place made for first and redemption. These places and spaces must invite men to sacred

safe spaces. They must be able to trust in the same spaces so men can be their authentic selves and not what people, the world, and this oppressive society say they should be.

In his first hidden years, we see that he grew up in Granville, lasting for twenty-one to twenty-two years until he became a free man. He proceeded into the military. These years of development were what he was brought to do because he was an avid reader, studious learner, and passionate about freedom. His farming training was such that he excelled and helped run much of Deacon Rose's business. This saying condition will be used within my ministry project to create spaces for honest discussion and sharing, so that I know this is a safe space.

Suppose we can take this process of hidden time and teach them how to mentor other men? Mentoring is the preferred way to reach other men, and in sacred safe spaces, mentorship as a methodology for connecting men to men is crucial. Jerome Stevens states in his book *A Manual for Men Mentoring Men* "Mentoring is the preferred method of relating to men because it can address many of the issues impacting men in our culture,"[29] reveal how men are able to connect with other men and be in spaces that will hide them from the pressure of our society for moments and time where they can be in community with other men. This will nurture them to become more of who they are. It was in the hidden time that Lemuel came to know who he was created to be, and other men must find ways to resolve our identity crisis, for everyone is telling us who to be except the God who created us.

In my project, I created a sacred and safe space for men to be who they are in the moment and discover who they are meant to be according to God in a community of

[29] Stevenson, *A Manual for Men Mentoring Men*, 71.

mentorship with other men. In this environment, men can explore and discover their identity as men of God. Welcome the men into a structured creative environment where life's wounds can be healed and dressed, and strength for the weary soul can be provided. The wise will guide the foolish, the lost will be found, and the seeker will discover his identity and calling. This is what Lemuel Haynes provided for me in my doctoral project.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will address the theological foundation of my hypothesis, focusing on my problem statement and how the theological themes are connected to the elements required to implement my ministry project. As a reminder, my problem statement concerns the low participation of Shiloh Baptist Church's men in the men's ministry. My hypothesis states that if the current men's ministry members participate in mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members.

We will conduct a theological assessment of the problem statement and hypothesis to clarify what the project must address and the hypothesis's impact in addressing it. We will first define the purpose of theology and how it is used to inquire about our faith practices and beliefs. Once this has been established, we will engage in theological inquiry into how Relational Theology as an inquiry tool provides theological insight along with biblical scripture and the voice of other theological scholars to firmly establish the lens of my theological thesis.

The dialogue will reflect on all the points of the thesis that inquire about the problem hypothesis and the overall project, and what insights will be revealed to be implemented within the project. This will support the project's structure and method of implementation to ensure the integrity of the results and proposed impact on the context.

To begin this theological dialog, we must define theology. If you ask any first-year seminarian, they will say theology is the study of God. Elaine A. Robinson defines theology this way. "The word theology comes from the Greek words theos (God) and logos (word, discourse). Literally, we could define theology as words about God or the study of God and the things of faith."[1] If theology is the study of God and the things of faith, then theology is the tool for those people of faith to understand God and how their faith should be lived out in the world. Why should we study? Paul tells us in Timothy 2:15: "Study *and* be eager *and* do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing *and* accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth." Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that no man can see the whole truth of God, but we see glimpses of God's mysterious truth, and our interpretation is through the lens of our context, which is ever-changing, whether it is our culture, location, or time. So, if we are truly faithful people to our God, we must use theology to critique our faith practices, traditions, and doctrines to ensure we are following our God's truth and not humanity's idols.

I believe that theology is more than just God. It is the active engagement of our faith and the questioning of what God is to us and our current generation and context. This is not just the scholarly pursuit of knowledge and academic achievement. It is the lifelong pursuit of the truth and the examination of it from multiple perspectives.

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[1] Elaine A. Robinson, *Introduction to Theology for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundry Books, an imprint of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2017).

To ensure we are grounded in our discussion, I want to clarify that this theological inquiry is within the Christian faith tradition. So, under theology, we will be inquiring within the Christian theology framework. To be very clear, it is the God whose only son is Jesus of Nazareth, also referred to as Jesus the Christ. This means our discussion will be within the scope of God as written in the Holy Bible. The God whose son is Jesus Christ and whose disciples are called Christians.

Here, we continue to see the same thread of discussion on the role theology plays in the lives of people of faith. Daniel L. Migliore says that "the task of theology is the assumption that faith and inquiry are inseparable."[2] Theology is the believer's tool for discovering how God is revealed in our lives and in the contexts of our times. Christian faith communities are constantly faced with inquiring, but are they doing so faithfully? If they are not using theology in this journey of discovery and growth, they have no criteria for what God's will is for them. This is crucial as it keeps the church relevant to the world while remaining faithful to God's call.

We see theology in use in the Bible. Paul was a learned Pharisee and a devoted Jew. After his conversion, he embraces the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is called and assigned as an apostle to the Gentiles. In his New Testament letters, we see how He did not preach the doctrines of the Jews to the Gentiles. He learned about their context and their culture. When Paul preached the Gospel message, he preached to who the people were and where they were at that time. This is why we see Paul's statement about his preaching in 1 Corinthians 9:22 -23: "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain

[2] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, fourth ed. (Chicago, IL: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 27, https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=7210862.

the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with *you*." Paul was using theology to discern the truth of God's will for preaching the Gospel, not his Jewish traditions and doctrines.

Migliore says, "Underlying each of these understandings of the task of theology is not the mere repetition of traditional doctrines but a persistent search for the truth to which they point and which they only partially and brokenly express."[3] It must not be about the transference of doctrines but the ongoing discovery of truth. As we search for the truth, we do so that we understand God within our place in history and context. To do this well, we must lead with our faith to gain understanding, or what Migliore has called "faith seeking understanding."[4] Each faith community's responsibility is to faithfully inquire about God and their lives, how we engage God, and how he manifests in our current historical and social context. My theological thesis presents a foundational framework that will clarify the main points of the thesis required for the ministry project to evaluate the hypothesis properly.

As Paul has used theology and various lenses to discern the will of God for his age and context, so must we employ the same rigor and faithfulness in this discourse. We will work within a similar Christian framework in this space and time. We will use Relational Theology as our lens to faithfully inquire about the church, its ministry to and in the world, and how it informs the ministry to men associated with my ministry project.

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[3] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 27.

[4] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 27.

When some scholars unfamiliar with Relational Theology hear the name, they automatically assume it is a branch of another theology, such as ecclesiology or missiology. Yet, we will define and explore Relational Theology by engaging the various theologians' thoughts and positions. This engagement will examine the definition of theology, its place among the other theologies, how it interacts with different theologies, and how the Relational Theology perspective impacts how major Christian concepts are viewed.

To ensure this dialog on Relational Theology is constructive. We need to start with an agreed-upon definition of Relational Theology. We will use the definition provided by Thomas Jay Oord. He states:

> At its core, relational theology affirms two key ideas: 1. God affects creatures in various ways. Instead of being aloof and detached, God is active and involved in relationships with others. God relates to us, and that makes an essential difference. 2. Creatures affect God in various ways. While God's nature is unchanging, creatures influence the loving and living Creator of the universe. We relate to God, and creation makes a difference to God.[5]

When scholars are unfamiliar with this theology, they immediately assume it is a branch of another theology, such as missional, trinitarian, or liberation theology.

Oord raises another point we cannot ignore. He says, "People interpret variously what the two main ideas of relational theology entail. Because of these diverse interpretations, relational theology is like a big umbrella idea under which various theological alternatives reside."[6] As we continue this dialog, you may see elements of these and other theologies because many aspects and elements of Relational Theology

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[5] Barry L. Callen et al., *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*, Brint Montgomery, Thomas Jay Oord, and Karen Strand Winslow, eds. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 2.

[6] Callen et al., *Relational Theology*, 2-3.

can be found within them. To further ground our dialog, we will also ground it within one of the elements of ecclesiology: the study of the church. Theology of the priesthood of all believers will be our grounding in this discussion, further supporting my thesis for this project.

The priesthood of all believers comes from 1 Peter 2:9-10 where Peter writes, "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Harry Clyde Munro further supports this theology in these words:

> Through Jesus Christ ... every believer has direct and immediate access to God. He needs no human professional mediator. Or if one does lose touch with God and seems unable to re-establish this personal relationship, a brother Christian may help him find the way back .... Unlike the professional priest who remains permanently as the necessary mediator between the believer and God, the pastor or lay brother who serves in this priestly way steps aside as soon as the relationship has been established and the person so helped can become his own priest.[7]

So, to restate for clarity's sake, our dialog will be based on the following theological premise. They are: 1) God is in an active relationship with us, and it makes an essential difference, 2) We are in an active relationship with God and creation, and it makes a difference to God, and 3) The priesthood of all believers applies to every believer, and there is no need for an earthly mediator once they become Christians. We have access to God. This means every believer has a personal relationship with God and

[7] James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 615, http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=6336770.

must be one with creation. Yet, it also requires accountability to believe in honoring the access through their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let us assess this problem statement through this theological lens: Our problem statement is the low participation of men in the men's ministry in a context experiencing significant church growth. The current ministry model has not changed since the eighth pastor's tenure, which grounded the men's ministry in the theology of fellowship with men, which was grounded in the cultural norms of manhood of 1997. It has been more than twenty-five years, and these same cultural norms are evident in the men's ministry.

Men will suffer in silence and close themselves off from their brotherhood to protect an image of manhood that is not biblical and is unhealthy for men. The cultural norms of the current ministry model do not address the relational barriers to healthy growing relationships that are open and inclusive for men in the church. This is due to the traditional view of ministry, and men have not been examined against the Bible's current interpretations and theologies. The current theology is one of dependence on God that separates the divine from the creature. This separation does not promote relational engagement between God and humanity. This happens when no new examination of the ministry's theological foundation occurs.

Michael Welker clarifies how the traditional reading of the creation story tends toward dependence and division from God. Still, he compares this to the actual reading of the creation story to reveal the relationality of the accounts. Welker states:

> Where the conventional guiding conceptions focus upon division and hierarchical arrangement, the classical creation accounts emphasize the connectedness and cooperation of creator and that which is creaturely. In no way do the creation accounts of Genesis offer only a gloomy picture of sheer dependence. God's creative action does not confront that which is created with completely finished

> facts. The creature's own activity as a constitutive element in the process of creation is seen in harmony with God's action.[8]

This further calls out the need for a fresh thesis for ministry.

The problem statement hypothesis is that if the church's men participate in mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members. This will shift the ministry model from one of dependency to one that is empowering and transformational to the church's men. Relationships and understanding how they create space and community for transformation are crucial to this project. The mentor-mentee relationship is vital and forms the basis of my theological thesis. It is necessary to understand that the relationship is not one of domination or control. It is a reciprocal relationship. As the mentor is mentoring the mentee, the mentee also mentors the mentor. Both have changed for the better because of this relationship.

When applied in this context, this theological model will open new ways of being that align with biblically based ones. It will also help create relationships with God and other men that show respect for all of God's creation and a willingness to accept and understand the otherness in God's creation. This model can be found in several biblical scriptures. Looking at the creation story, we will see that God's engagement is not just a passing thing for God but makes a difference for God and us.

Where do we see this relatedness? This interrelatedness is passed down to the rest of creation through God's creation. God is creating the world and man. For every creature was created, a God created every beast by speaking them into existence. God decided to make man in His image, take the earth, form the body, and breathe into the form, and

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[8] Michael Welker, "What Is Creation? Rereading Genesis 1 and 2," *Theology Today* 48, no. 1 (1991): 56, 64, http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-creation-rereading-genesis-1-2/docview/208072594/se-2.

man became a living soul. God's following action is to assign dominion over the earth's creatures. This requires the engagement of God with man, and in this, God affects man and the rest of creation in this first set of relational actions. We see this in Genesis 1:29; scripture says God said, which speaks to engagement and relationship. For God is trusting man (Adam) with every aspect of creation.

Of course, this position of God being relational is not a new concept or discussion. Terence Fretheim states, "The being of God is a relational being."[9] Fretheim continues by saying, "Such realities as the divine council, the sons of God, and the heavenly messengers witness that Isreal's God is by nature a social being, functioning within a divine community."[10] Fretheim's position is based first on Genesis 1:6 and 6:1-4 as the basis but continues to reference Isaiah 6:8, Jeremiah 23:18-23 and Proverbs 8:22-31.[11] In these scriptures, he makes the case that relationality is fundamental to the very nature of God. God does not want to remain in heaven silent. He is an ever engaging and active participant in the life of His creation and people. We also see this in Genesis Chapter Two. Every engagement after God created man was about God bringing something to man. There was a need for a relationship, and it had to be intimate because he was always getting something from men, the animals, so he could name them. He brought the woman to him. He took her and placed her. There was an ongoing relationship and engagement with God in the creation and the fall of man in the first two chapters of Genesis. Scot and Hays address this relationship by pointing out the type of

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[9] Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 37, ProQuest Ebook Central, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=856733.

[10] Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 37.

[11] Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 31.

relationship exhibited in Genesis 3:8 among God, man, and his wife in the garden. Scott and Hays say, "This has staggering implications for our understanding of the relationship between God and the first couple. He has graciously placed them in a wonderful garden with everything provided for them. Most important of all, they were blessed by the close, personal fellowship with the very real presence of God himself."[12]

We first see the actual relationship among God, Adam, and Eve. We see how to set up the Garden of Eden for them and give them charge to oversee what they can eat and not eat. To be fruitful and multiply, He defines the marriage relationship between man and woman. There is a relationship between God and His creation. We see the intimacy of their relationship, even in the creation of the woman. God causes Adam to sleep and removes the rib from him. God must touch and care for Adam in this divine operation. This experience of giving him a woman so that he would not be alone but have someone to be in a relationship with. Remember God's word, not Adam's, in Genesis 2:18: "And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." This is a level of God's relational activity in caring for His creation, the ongoing relationship between God and creation, and the interrelatedness within His creation.

We see further confirmation of this relationship in Genesis Chapter Three, when we read about the account of the "Fall of Man." Theologians and Christians alike bemoan and fixate on humanity's shortcomings in this moment, particularly the woman's role. Never mind that Adam, as the man, should have been even more responsible for

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[12] J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 31, https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5966823.

this shared disobedience. I want to focus on the evidence of a deep and intimate relationship between God and the first couple. After the act of disobedience, there is an immediate disconnection in the relationship between God and man. The first thing they do is cover up the creation of their bodies with aprons made from fig leaves. In the eighth verse of the chapter, we see the description of God's presence. It says, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?" (Gn. 3:8-9). This is an intimate description of God's presence, followed by God's response in nine words with "Where are thou?" These are the words of longing and missing because He already knows the relationship has been broken.

This also shows how creation and humanity can and continue to affect God in the relationship. Remember, God said if you eat of the tree, you will die. Many theologians say that God meant a spiritual death and not a natural one. The scripture says Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In all the research on the word die, there is no nuance between the spirit and the natural.

The broken relationship between God and all creation is because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. They should receive their punishment to die, and the book should be closed. Let's move on to the next creature within creation to engage in a relationship. God does not kill them. God presents an opportunity to redeem themselves by owning their disobedience. They do not own their disobedience, but Adam blames Eve and God. Eve blames her inability to resist the serpent's temptation. This does not sound like a God, not

in an intimate relationship with his creation. God does not kill anyone who does not take accountability. Instead, He creates the path to redemption by placing curses on Adam, Eve, and the serpent. He gives the new clothing from the sacrifice of an animal so they are covered in the blood of a living creature and casts them out so they will not live forever in their sin. This is the God of another chance because of His love for humanity.

How is God affected by man in this relationship, for this is the second condition? We see this when we look at man's fall in the garden. This is God's love, which engages in a mutual relationship with humanity. The Bible is the story and blueprint for God's redemption and restoration of His creation, bringing us back into an intimate relationship with Him. We see God act with Noah when He destroys the world by flood and still saves Noah, his family, and two of every creature. He is engaged with Noah throughout because of his love for humanity. We see that he set a part of Israel through Joseph and then Moses more than 400 years later. He seeks to dwell as close to His people as possible because He wants them to be in a relationship and reciprocate with God.

Terence Frethiem makes this case by bringing Brueggemann into his discussion. He states, "To use Brueggemann's language, 'the human person is a person in relation to Yahweh, who lives in an intense mutuality with Yahweh.'"[13] If we are in an intense mutuality with God, can we not affect God and change his mind? If he did in the beginning, would there not be other opportunities to change God's decisions through our relationship with Him? I dare say yes!

[13] Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 32.

Some accept the fact that God can engage with creation and be affected by emotions, but they do not go far enough, for they believe that if we attribute human emotions to God, we reduce his divinity. So, Karl Barth is one theologian who is clear that God is affected or is not impassible by emotions but only for the things He has decided to be affected by, and those are our sinful conditions, which bring Him sorrow. This sorrow is why He extends mercy to us. Barth states the following "God has a heart. He can feel, sense, be affected. He is not impassable. He cannot be moved from outside by an extraneous power. But this does not mean that He is not capable of moving Himself."[14] Andrew Gabriel states, "Barth proposes further that God's mercy includes pity for the sinner, and, therefore, God's sorrow is greater than ours."[15] Here, he clarifies that the sinner's condition moves God to have mercy on us because God has defined what he will allow to cause him to suffer. Barth falls short on the mutuality between the divine and the creature because he still holds that the sacred and the creature are separate. There is no mutuality between God and man.

I agree that the sacred, humanity, and creation are not on the same level, but the divine can still be holy and intimate with His creation. Yet, the past theologians still see a division and separation between God and humanity. They believe they cannot be connected to a relationship of mutuality because humankind depends on God. God is dictating, and we are so lost in our fallen state that we are utterly dependent on God.

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[14] Frank D. Macchia, Terry L. Cross, and Andrew K. Gabriel, eds., *Karl Barth and Pentecostal Theology: A Convergence of the Word and the Spirit* (London, UK: T and T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2024), 67, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=3715932.

[15] Macchia, Cross, and Gabriel, *Karl Barth and Pentecostal Theology*, 67.

Yet we have multiple instances in the Bible where God has changed his decisions in response to people's actions. He gave Nebuchadnezzar fifteen more years of life. Moses cried to the Lord. If we look at how relationships form and thrive. Noah's response in Genesis 8:20-22 clearly shows God's heart being moved. "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done'" (Gn. 8:20-21).

These scriptures show that we can and have changed God's heart because of our worship and response to his call. If He started in the beginning, it must continue even now. What is the reason? It is the love that God has for His creation, which includes humanity. Yes, God is holy and divine, and we are just sinful humans, but He loved us so much that He gave us Jesus so that divinity and humankind may be one in reconciliation.

So, okay, but there must be a motivation behind relationships, and there are those like Barth who attribute sorrow as the reason God extends mercy if sorrow drives God to extend mercy to humanity and creation. What a miserable life that would be. The motivation for God's mercy and grace is that we bring sorrow and pain to our God. Now, I am not saying God does experience sorrow over our sinful state and when we fall short. Love is the counterargument to sorrow in God's motivation for creation and, therefore, for all he is doing beyond giving us Jesus Christ.

Curtis Holtzen speaks of love's role in creation. They say, "I am persuaded that God has authored creation out of God's own loving nature for the purpose of loving

relationships. This means that God has created the world to form community and fellowship in ways that reflect and generate unfathomable love."[16] It is this love of God for us. He provides access through Jesus Christ to all who will believe. This access brings together and links the final point of my thesis. It is the priesthood of all saints. It means we all have access to God; intimate relationships and a community of faith and love come with access. These are the benefits, but there is a responsibility and accountability to everyone in the community. We must be in an active relationship with God and each other because it makes a difference.

In Mark 1:16-20, we see Jesus calling his first disciples. In this scripture, we see a relational God, and the disciples' response affects not only Jesus but everyone they encounter. In this scripture, Jesus invites them into an intimate relationship with him. In both requests, he says, "Follow me." The brothers drop everything and follow him. No questions asked. In their response, they created the first faith community. They were called out of their family community into a new community of faith. They were called by the rich and the poor of the fishing community.

We see the three points that are the pillars of my thesis. They are: 1) God's living and intimate relational engagement with us makes a difference in our lives, 2) Our living and intimate relationship with God affects Him, and 3) All believers have access to God because the church is the priesthood of all believers because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. Christians are accountable for their daily engagement with God, our fellow humanity, and the rest of creation in an intimate relationship.

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[16] William Curtis Holtzen, *The God Who Trusts: A Relational Theology of Divine Faith, Hope, and Love* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 19, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2183552.

The three pillars are the basis for my hypothesis, which is to train men to become mentors to the men in the church. We see when Jesus called the disciples in Mark 1:16-20. The relationship was formed as a mentor-to-mentee relationship, and he was able to transform them into disciples. This relationship impacted not just the disciples but also transformed Jesus. Their relationship is a clear example of transformation in relationships and a community.

This supports the method of reinvigorating the relationship among the men of the church through intentional mentoring relationships that transform both participants. Jesus spent three years mentoring the disciples; they had their highs and lows together—three years of making mistakes, growing, and changing into fishers of men.

Let us look at Jesus' ministry when he prepares the disciples for ministry and when he is about to leave them. In the Gospel of John 17:21-26, Jesus is praying to the Father on behalf of the disciples with whom he has been intimate for almost three years. In his prayer, he declares that He and the Father are one. He even goes into detail in verse twenty-one, where he says, “thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee.” He wants the disciples to know Jesus and the Father are one and in each other. They have the most intimate relationship possible. In the same verse, he invites them to be part of this relationship. If you look at the start and the end, Jesus prays, saying, “That they all may be one; as” and at the end of the verse, he says, “that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jn. 17:21).

In both, we see the invitation to a loving relationship that promises a community of support, safety, and growth. This creates the condition for people to experience transformation in their lives. The church must provide sacred, safe spaces for all people

to experience. Historically, the Black Church has handed down its doctrines and traditions from generation to generation. These have all been born of the struggle for justice, against discrimination, and for economic empowerment. The challenges and norms of those times of social justice have changed over the past twenty to thirty years.

Black Churches are undergoing change at a faster pace than ever before. The issue is that Black Christian men, who are traditionally church members and leaders, are not adapting to these changes and the new members coming into worship alongside them. In some cases, they have lost their place in leadership or authority, or the old ways of doing things have caused them to withdraw from active participation. You have a new membership of men looking for other men to show and support their integration with the church, and a large membership of men.

The challenge with the culture change is that the church has not wrestled with what this means for the men in these congregations and communities. How do they adjust their view of their faith? Many are embracing the changes because they had to shift in their workplaces, but others have not embraced them and have retreated. They are withdrawn and expect to wait for the changes. This does not help the new men who may not have a history of church attendance and are looking for guidance in how men engage in church life and fellowship. What transformation is going to happen? They must be invited to these communities of relationship by other men. Creating these communities requires a new type of leadership among men to foster safe spaces and support men's relationships with one another.

Relational Theology is the foundation of my project to create a community for the men of my context. It is a safe and sacred space for them to be vulnerable to other men

and be open to challenges and growth as Christian men. As discussed earlier, God created a community to foster transformation and change in humanity's lives. To build this community, men must become leaders who can serve as mentors and learn new ways to create and grow relationships with men from different social, economic, and ethical contexts. This leader will be open to new ways of mentoring men into the faith.

When relationships are grounded in the knowledge that God is ever-present within them, men are open to reimagining ministry through the relationships we have and create. It will make the faith and trust we all desire open to new ways of being present in each other's lives and of supporting other men without judgment. To embrace the love of God in building a brotherhood of faith that can face the changes and challenges of this present age.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The interdisciplinary field of research I have chosen for my project is leadership. The rationale for my choice is revealed in Northouse's definition of leadership: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."[1] My project is to influence men to increase their participation in the ministry, and this field of research aligns with this goal.

The theory in this selected field is transformational leadership. The definition of this theory makes it clear why it is so well-suited to my project. As we look at transformational leadership, we see that it is about impacting and changing not only followers but also the leader so that they become partners in delivering on the organization's vision, mission, goals, and objectives. In that relational exchange, the leader and the follower are transformed in several ways, benefiting everyone involved. This theory is crucial, I believe, to resolve the problem statement of the hypothesis and the ministry project. Making a change or impact within the context will require a transformation of the men's ministry, congregation, and the ministry's leadership. This fundamental factor has driven my decision to select transformational leadership as the

[1] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2019), 5.

interdisciplinary theory to investigate, assess, and determine its interaction and impact on my hypothesis and ministry project.

The research on this theory will explore its interaction and how it supports changes and further informs my biblical, historical, and theological perspective on addressing the problem within the context of men's low participation in the men's ministry. Transformational leadership will help assess and interrogate the foundational views developed so far and identify possible blind spots or ways of seeing that could enhance the design and implementation of the ministry project.

Several fields and disciplines were reviewed, and leadership was the field or discipline to be researched. After researching various leadership theories, transformational and transactional theories were selected because they are connected through the large body of work from multiple scholars. These two theories continue to show a connection in the reviewed research. Several sources on these leadership theories were reviewed to identify which one aligns most with the current contextual challenges concerning the problem and hypotheses. Transformational leadership is the interdisciplinary theory that will be explored and interrogated regarding the hypothesis and ministry project.

Transformational leadership will be defined and explained by what it is not in comparison to transactional leadership. Transformational leadership will then be used as a lens to review biblical, historical, and theological foundational conclusions, explain and show how the theory interacts with each one, and describe how it enhances these foundational positions. The chapter will conclude by describing how transformational leadership is foundational to the ministry project and the resolution of the hypothesis.

James MacGregor Burns first introduced this theory in 1978 in his study of leadership and demonstrated the difference between it and power. Burns established his study with two fundamental theories of leadership: the first was transactional leadership, and the other was transformational leadership. Peter G. Northouse states, “In his work, Burns attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership. He wrote of leaders as people who tap the motives of followers in order to better reach the goals of leaders and followers.”[2] If we look at James MacGregor Burns' definition of a transformational leader, which states, “Recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower ... (and) looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower."[3] We combine this definition with Bernard M. Bases' definition of transformational leadership, which is the leader who recognizes the transactional needs in potential followers “but tends to go further seeking to arouse and satisfy higher needs to engage the full person of the follower ... to a higher level of need according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.”[4]

The problem of men's low participation, in view of this theory, becomes apparent. To gain a clear understanding, we need to further define the theory and its critical components, as this will reveal the issue that has caused the problem. This will be the first proof that transformational theory is foundational to the project.

Considering this definition of transformational leadership, we must also dive deeper into what underpins the theory. It stands on the shoulders of transactional

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[2] Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 164.

[3] David Minja and Kirimi Ardon Barine, *Transformational Corporate Leadership* (Luton, UK: Andrews UK Ltd, 2010), 37, ProQuest Ebook Central, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=440991.

[4] Minja and Barine, *Transformational Corporate Leadership,* 37.

leadership and has elements of charismatic leadership theories that also interplay within this theory. Transactional leadership theory underpins many leadership models studied and analyzed, and is the most prevalent type of leadership in organizations. As Karl Kuhnert and Philip Lewis defined, transactional leadership theory states, "In these situations, leaders are influential because doing what the leaders want is in the best interest of the followers. Effective transactional leaders must regularly fulfill the expectations of their followers. Thus, effective transactional leadership is contingent on the leader's abilities to meet and respond to the reactions and changing expectations of their followers."[5]

Transactional leadership is the current ministry leadership model for the men's ministry. It requires the leader's active engagement to assess the followers' wants and desires continually. If the leader is not actively assessing, meeting, or offering something, the followers will help the leader meet the ministry's goals. The followers, in this case, the men of the church, will find something else to take their time and attention. The other shortcoming of transactional leadership is that it is not sustainable over an extended period. The transactional model eventually focuses on maintaining instead of growing the ministry, which leads to stagnant ministry, and this is what has happened to the men's ministry.

Even though transactional theory has its shortfalls, it is still the foundation for transformational leadership. Most people in a transactional leadership environment do not hope to experience change or transformation from a transactional leader. In this space, a

[5] Karl W. Kuhnert and Philip Lewis, "Transactional and Transformational Leadership: A Constructive/Developmental Analysis," *The Academy of Management Review* 12, no. 4 (1987): 648–657, https://doi.org/10.2307/258070.

charismatic leader or charismatic leadership, another leadership theory by R. J. House, usually can be implemented. In this model, the charismatic leader is central, and they bring four personality elements that can inspire and build trust with followers. Northouse explains R. J. House's theory by stating, “In his theory of charismatic leadership, house suggested that charismatic leaders act in unique ways that have specific charismatic effects on their followers.”[6] Northouse continues this discussion by identifying four behavior types associated with charismatic leaders. “First, they are strong role models for the beliefs and values that they want their followers to adopt. … Second, charismatic leaders appear to be competent to their followers. Third, they articulate ideological goals that have moral overtones. Fourth, charismatic leaders communicate high expectations for followers, and they exhibit confidence in followers’ abilities to meet these expectations.”[7]

The charisma theory has two flaws that do not make it a viable theory for my project. The first is that the goals and objectives are all about the leader. It is not about taking into consideration following followers. The second issue I see with charismatic leadership is that once the leader is no longer there or has changed attention or direction, the followers are left to their own devices. This will eventually lead to transactional leadership, which will not be sustainable over the long term because the followers’ identity is tied up in the organization, which the charismatic leader drives.

This is exactly what the men’s ministry experienced with a charismatic leader who focused on building the men’s ministry and, at some point, switched attention to

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[6] Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 166.

[7] Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 166.

other ministries. When his tenure ended, the next pastor did not provide charismatic leadership for the ministry, and the ministry continued to try to maintain what it was rather than grow. To address the problem, the leadership model will need to change to one that will bring change and endure for the long term of the ministry and the context.

Transformational leadership theory provides the model for the behaviors required to bring about change and transformation. It is not just for the moment; if done well, it will endure and continue to grow the men and the ministry for years to come. Bass expanded on the works of Burns and R. J. House. Northouse shows that Bass' work supports a transformational leadership model. This model demonstrates that the elements of transactional leadership are genuinely foundational to transformational leadership. Charisma leadership is also an aspect of the transformational model because it requires inspiration, which charismatic leaders usually drive and experience.

Bass research focuses more attention on the followship. This is made clear by Northouse when he states, "Bass extended Burns's work by giving more attention to followers' rather than leaders' needs, by suggesting that transformational leadership could apply to situations in which the outcomes were not positive, and by describing transactional and transformational leadership as a single continuum rather than mutual independent continua."[8] Northouse continues this explanation by speaking to Bass' expansion of House's work. Northouse states, "Bass extended House's work by giving more attention to the emotional elements and origins of charisma and by suggesting that

[8] Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 168.

charisma is a necessary but not sufficient condition for transformational leadership."[9] Northouse brings together the support that each is an element and foundation for transformational leadership.

As we can see, these three theories are interrelated. Transactional is foundational, and charisma is an element of the process that builds and leads to transformational leadership theory. We can see this relationship further in Bass's and Avolio's work, which does not clarify the transformational leadership model through the leadership continuum, which goes from transformational to laissez-faire leadership. This continuum shows the leadership from effective to ineffective, with transformational leadership being at the top, transactional being the middle ground, and lazy fair leadership being the least effective. Out of this continuum there has also been the development of the Full Range of Leadership Model. B. M. Bass and J. Avolio developed this model to show the leadership factors for each leadership theory within this continuum.

First, look at the four factors of transformational leadership. Factor one is idealized influence or charisma. J. Atonakis states, "It is the emotional component of leadership."[10] This manifests when leaders' moral and ethical standards are such that they will do the right thing. This creates a perception of the followers and a desire to emulate the behaviors of such a leader. The second factor is inspirational motivation. This factor describes the leaders who can communicate a vision that brings excitement and emotional appeal and is usually connected with symbols and ways of behaving that inspire

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[9] Peter G. Northouse and J. Antonakis, "Transformational and Charismatic Leadership," in *The Nature of Leadership*, David V. Day and J. Antonakis, ed., second ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 256-288; Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 168.

[10] John Antonakis and David V. Day, eds., *The Nature of Leadership,* third ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2018), https://sk.sagepub.com/books/the-nature-of-leadership-3e.

followers to emulate. This will typically lead followers to perform higher than if they were based on self-interest. The third factor is intellectual stimulation. This is commonly seen in leaders who motivate followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their beliefs and values, as well as those of the leader and the organization. This is also seen as support for followers as they try to address organizational issues and challenges in new and creative ways. They are also encouraged to think outside the box to deliver new ways of thinking and working. The fourth factor is individualized consideration. This factor seems to be when a leader begins coaching and supporting followers so that they can actualize their wants, needs, and dreams. The leader creates an environment that allows followers to work to the fullness of who they are and grow. It will ship them to become leaders themselves but, most importantly, the best version of themselves.

Northouse simplifies these factors into five leadership behaviors that are crucial to transformational leaders' effectiveness and success. These behaviors are Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.[11] These five behaviors are necessary to develop the four factors that must be present within a team or organization.

Looking at biblical research, we see that the call-and-response between Jesus and the disciples in Mark 1:16-20 is evident. In this assessment of the scripture, I have seen how transformational leadership is evident in Jesus' call to the disciples. Jesus demonstrates the behaviors of a transformational leader. He modeled the way not just for the disciples, but he is our model for how we live and be disciples. He presents a shared vision of the purpose of his ministry and how it would be transformed. He told them they

[11] Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 176.

would become fishers of men. He challenges their current lives by calling them to follow him and to leave their lives as fishermen. He provides them space to act on the call and their response by leaving their lives immediately to follow Jesus.

He encourages their heart to be the best version of themselves. As we look at the disciples in later scripture, we see he is teaching and leading them, but he eventually sends them out to do ministry two by two. They come back overjoyed by the power they can wield. Jesus again celebrates them but instructs them. He has cared for them by lifting them and correcting them when necessary, so they can grow.

This is the model that will transform the men of the context. This transformation will lead to a change in the closed culture of the men's ministry. The current culture is intracultural and needs to become intercultural in the face of a growing number of men, especially in the new age groups that had not been seen in years before the current pastor's arrival and leadership. There is growth, and for growth to continue, men must have a reinvigorated space for men to heal and grow to be the best version of themselves.

I better understand the context and problem, strengthening my hypotheses about how to address it. The hypothesis is that if the current men's ministry members participate in mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members. The mentors would also be trained to be transformational leaders with a vision of shifting the culture towards openness to all men. The class would equip them with the vision, mission, and purpose. They would learn the behaviors of transformational leaders and be provided an opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

This will impact the development of the class material, ensuring we incorporate the ability for men to understand what a transformational leader is and what the

environment looks like for the leader, mentor, and prospective mentee. It will also impact the data collection tools, as they will need to include measures of transformational leadership behaviors to assess whether there are changes among project participants.

Look at the biblical foundations from Mark 1:16-20. The position concerns the call of Jesus and the response of the first disciples. What was it about the call, and why did the disciples respond without question? This was about the promise that Jesus offered them of something new and transformational. This theory interacts and engages with how Jesus was a transformational leader. He has set the example and checks off the five behaviors in the scripture.

The first is Model the Way. Jesus was the model for the disciples. He preached that the kingdom of God is at hand. He lived his preaching and teaching. How do we know and understand that Jesus modeled the way? Mark 1:1-15 establishes Jesus' Christology and ministry. For this reason, when Jesus called the disciples, Mark 1:16-20, they responded without question. Mark shows that he inspired them with a vision of transformation and a new way of being. Jesus promised that if they followed him, he would make them fishers of men if this vision was not shared by them all. The kingdom of God is coming.

Jesus challenged the process, the third behavior we see throughout his ministry. Jesus challenged the status quo when he healed the woman with the issue of blood, the woman who should not have been touched because of her issue of blood. Jesus challenged the religious order when he turned the tables in the temple because they were charging the Jewish people an excessive amount of money for sacrifices. He challenged the Pharisees on divorce and various religious issues.

So, the fourth behavior is to enable others to act. In Mark 6:7-13, Jesus gives the disciples power and sends them out to preach the Gospel. They go out without him and preach and heal according to his teaching. They come back overjoyed by the results of their efforts.

The fifth behavior is to Encourage the Heart. In Matthew 16:13-19, we see how Jesus encourages the heart. Peter, when answered Jesus' question, “he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Mt. 16:13). Peter’s answer was, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16). Jesus goes on to celebrate Peter's answer among the disciples. Jesus always spent time with the disciples, teaching and encouraging their ministry in proclaiming the Gospel.

The five behaviors are crucial for addressing the problem and must be measured within the project. Addressing the issue requires transforming culture and people's perspectives on what Christian men's relationships should be and why having a thriving, open, and growing community of men is essential to the kingdom of God.

This research has helped clarify biblical study and other aspects of biblical scripture that exemplify the behaviors and factors within transformational leadership theory. Jesus' call to his first disciples and throughout his ministry to bring transformation to Israel and the world is evidence of this leadership model. The discipleship class must be innovative and creative to ensure that the participants experience the same impact.

Examining the intersection of transformational leadership theory and Relational Theology is important. According to Thomas Jay Oord, Relational Theology “at its core, affirms two key ideas: 1. God affects creatures in various ways. Instead of being aloof

and detached, God is active and involved in relationships with others. God relates to us, and that makes an essential difference. 2. Creatures affect God in various ways. While God's nature is unchanging, creatures influence the loving and living Creator of the universe. We relate to God and creation makes a difference to God."[12]

As we can see in the definition of Relational Theology, it speaks to God being active and involved in relationships with others or us, making an essential difference. Here we see a parallel to transformational leadership behavior involving the follower, so that the follower may become the best version of themselves without losing their identity. If we look at the second part of the definition, we see that it concerns the creature's relationship with God; therefore, creation makes a difference to God. This also aligns with the factors and behaviors of transformational theory because the leader is impacted, shifted, or changed by the engaging relationship with the follower.

This leadership theory intersects with Relational Theology, helping to identify and confirm for the project the type of relationship required to facilitate implementing the project and drive results for transformation in the context's culture. This is necessary to support intercultural relationships among men, which will increase participation in men's ministry. In Relational Theology research, the assumption is that this relationship was established in the beginning. Terence says the following "In sum, this relational perspective means that God's sovereignty is understood, not in the terms of absolute divine control, but as sovereignty that gives power over to the created for the sake of a

[12] Callen et al., *Relational Theology*, 2.

relationship of integrity."[13] This relationship is throughout the Bible. Terence further confirms by saying,

> But even in the face of human sin—no minimizing this—God treats human beings with integrity and honor and does not renege on the original entrusting of humans with creational and future-shaping responsibilities as 3:23 shows (and Psalm 8). The story of Noah, the one human being named as righteous in Genesis 1–11 (6:9), testifies that not all post-sin human behavior is a betrayal of that trust. In exemplary obedience to the divine command, and that is stressed in the narrative, he makes sure that the animals get taken into the ark and are thereby preserved.[14]

God continues to engage in a relationship with sinful man because he is fulfilling the promise made in the beginning.

This research also affirms that God's model of engaging with us from the beginning is still relevant. He established it in Genesis, and it continues to flow throughout the Bible in every aspect of God's interaction with humanity. This theory, which studies leadership among people, affirms that what works well with us was modeled initially and demonstrated by God in the Garden of Eden and through the ministry of Jesus Christ. If we relook at the definition as stated by Northouse of transformational leadership we the following "transformational leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower."[15] This connection is a relationship, and it is the same one that we find in the definition of Relational Theology between God and creation.

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[13] Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament,* 228-229.

[14] Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 288.

[15] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership + Northouse: Leadership*, eighth ed. IEB (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 164.

To this point, these theories from the areas of leadership and theology are crucial to the ministry project, as the relationship is the problem, and the hypothesis will have an impact on addressing the problem. Ensuring relations are being impacted will require data collection methods to measure some essential aspects of the relationships between men and God and between other men. To accomplish this, I will need to review examples of the Multifactor Leadership questionnaire that was developed by Bass in 1985.[16] This measure will help ensure we know if the project improves relationships overall. Reviewing some of the measuring tools for transformational leadership will help to incorporate the correct questions into the data collection and analysis.

The last parallel we see in the research for transformational leadership that aligns with Relational Theology is that all things are done in the community. Jesus called the disciples from various social and economic classes into the Jewish society. He has the incarnation of God and created a community of faith from twelve distinct individuals to answer the call to carry the Gospel while he was here on earth and after he had left to be with the Father. Transformational leadership has been found in one study to bring about organizational innovation by creating a culture in which employees felt empowered and encouraged to freely discuss and try new things.[17] Cultural change requires the community to be engaged in making change occur. We look at the biblical research Jesus in Mark 1:16-20 is calling the new disciples into a new community and a culture shift. These parallels are foundational to the project to be implemented.

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[16] Northouse, *Leadership + Northouse*, 189.

[17] Northouse, *Leadership + Northouse*, 178.

The transformational theory has also brought new light to the historical foundation of this work. Lemuel Haynes is the historical figure for this ministry project. This leadership theory is evident in his early years as a child and young man, while living within the family structure provided by his adoptive parents. In this structure, we see how he became a part of the family and how much was invested in his education, his ability to learn work, and most importantly, his Bible instruction and religious education. Lemuel, being born of African and white parents and then abandoned, was considered less than within the culture and time that he lived. The family took him in as an indentured servant to help clear, till, and farm the land in New England. He was raised in a family that believed in education and religious instruction.[18]

As in any family, they cast their vision of what it means to live as a human being in the world according to their religious beliefs and passed them on to Lemuel. They also passed on political views concerning independence from England at the time, including those popular in the Americas. In this early time of his life, he excels in his education, both religiously and in his trade, but he also excels in his conduct in the village to become accepted as one of high moral character.[19] The intersection of transformational leadership in the period of his life when he is preparing for the ministry. Once, his ability and skill in interpreting and preaching the word of God was recognized by his adopted father and family and by the local congregation. The community supports him by introducing him to the pastors to support his entry into the seminary. At this time, Lemuel gained two new mentors, who were transformational leaders, Reverend Daniel Farrand and Reverend

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[18] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes,* 30-32.

[19] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 31.

William Bradford of Canaan, Connecticut. His Latin teacher was Reverend Daniel Farrand, and his Greek teacher Reverend William Bradford was responsible for enrolling him in schools. During this time, he was also encouraged by the advice of his friend both minsters and laity to pursue his license for ministry, which was granted on November 29, 1780.[20]

This is an example of leaders helping followers grow to be their best, authentic selves. In Lemuel's life, we see other men helping him develop as a minister. This mentorship relationship led to him preaching and pastoring congregations and eventually enabled him to transform others through his service. In his writings, he was instrumental in the development of abolitionism within Republican thought of the times.[21] This is an example of how allyship is developed between people of different backgrounds yet can have a commonality. In this case, the commonality is God.

Transformational leadership is foundational to my project because it touches on every aspect of my ministry project. At first, when we look at my problem statement, we see that transformational leadership has given a different perspective on my problem statement on how to view the actual issue that I am trying to address, which is an intercultural issue and not an issue of gender relations. There is a cultural disconnect within the men that is keeping the men's ministry from growing, and we require men to step up and become mentors, leaders, and transformational leaders; their behaviors and factors involved by those things will allow us to begin transforming key men to start showing that example and reaching out and making connection within the context.

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[20] Cooley, *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes*, 63.

[21] Saillant and Saillant, *Black Puritan, Black Republican,* 45.

Next, let's look at the biblical foundation of my project. We see that transformational leadership has put a new lens on how we see, even in Jesus calling the disciples and saying that he will make them fishers of men. We see the transformational leadership factors and behaviors he cast. We see the vision he modeled for how you should live, and as a transformational leader, the expectations were set. He was about understanding their desires and what they wanted, so they did not lose their identity but became more of their authentic selves as disciples. They were not perfect when it came time to step on the stage and be the apostles. Still, they were ready to grow their community of twelve into something more significant.

And then, if we evaluate how this leadership theory engages with Relational Theology, we see that it validates the engagement of God with humanity and humanity engaging with God and how we impact and cause change. So transformational leadership brings about transformation in the followers and in the leader, which then results in the transformation of the culture and, therefore, the organization and the achievement of the purpose and goals of said organization.

Then, we looked at the historical foundations of this project with Lemuel Haynes and his story. Arising from security in a society that was not kind to an African man. A society where he could have been sold into slavery but instead was indentured because he was an abandoned child who grew up within a White society that said that he was not even considered a full person but yet was able to grow under the environment and structure of the family that emulated the transformational theory that allowed him throughout his life to be constantly and continually being amid mentors and leaders who

were transforming him so that eventually he became the inspiring transformational leader and the abolition movement in the United States.

I believe that transformational leadership is crucial to my project because it delivers the key behaviors and factors that would need to be taught to the male participants. As a result, they will become leaders and mentors. Additionally, they will show up as mentees to create reciprocal relationships with other men and be open to different relationships outside of their current circles. They will be able to cross the gaps in age, social status, and economic status that currently keep them separate. It requires men to be equipped with the concept and the idea of what transformational leadership is, what it looks like, and how it shows up so that we can change the culture amongst the men that makes them more open to other men, despite where they have come from, where they live, or where they work.

The men in my ministry project must learn to be open to vulnerability, accepting, and engaging in different types of relationships than they have experienced before. This requires leaders who are mentors and ready to be mentees within these relationships. We must shift our perspective on relationships with men to better understand the current culture of men.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Shiloh Baptist Church has experienced more than 354% percent growth in overall membership over the course of five years under Pastor Danielle Brown. Under her leadership, the model of pastoral leadership has shifted toward empowerment, love, grace, and pastoral support. Yet, during this time of growth, the men's fellowship ministry has lagged, and the men-to-women ratio has shifted by 5% in favor of women. Yet in this time of growth, we are seeing more young men joining the church and seeking connection and community for themselves and their families.

We also see that the men's fellowship, which meets monthly, has averaged twenty-five men, while the women's fellowship has grown to more than 100 women attending, with attendance continuing to grow. When the women host a women's night out, they have grown to accommodate 500 women, and on a men's day, we have reached just sixty men. The change in the pastoral leadership model has created a gap and brokenness within the community of men in Shiloh that they have been unable to negotiate or bridge. The men have not been able to accomplish this required shift as they are not equipped with the tools and a new way of being men of God. In this work, I have identified a model that will equip men to navigate the required change at the Shiloh Baptist Church of Plainfield, New Jersey.

My work is based on the following hypothesis. If the men of Shiloh participate in a discipleship class focused on mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other male church members. This will transform the ministry model from a leadership model centered on the ministry leader to a team-oriented leadership model equipped to reach all men across all cultural spaces, revitalizing men's engagement in the ministry. This project is an academic research study of the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations that have informed its exploration and addresses the problem presented by the men of Shiloh Baptist Church.

The biblical module explored Mark 1:16-20 and Jesus' call to his first disciples. It was in this module that the "call and response" theme of the teaching. The lesson explored the call of Jesus, examining why it was so compelling to Simon, Andrew, James, and John. We also explored the responses of both brothers to understand the importance of identity and how they left behind their previous identities as they were raised to embrace the new identity and purpose Jesus was calling them to.

The historical module examined the life of Reverend Lemuel Haynes, the first African American ordained in the United States. In this teaching, we explore identity and the importance of finding your identity in God rather than in what the world has, and attempt to shape who you are as men, in looking at his life and exploring the lives of other notable African American Christian men to provide perspective on how others have navigated how the systematic discrimination in the United States have been countered by community and allyship to embrace their authentic selves as good and part of God's plan.

The theological module examined how Relational Theology is evident throughout Mark 1:16-20 and how it is crucial to understanding how to engage with men differently

from the way the men of Shiloh have done in the past. This module was taught through the lens of three pillars: 1) God's intimate relationship engagement with humanity makes a difference in our lives, 2) Our living in an intimate relationship with God affects Him, and 3) All believers have access to God, as the church is the priesthood of all believers because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. The teaching in this module emphasized the importance of men's relationships with God and with others, which is foundational for creating sacred spaces and places where community can be made and nurtured, just for men.

The interdisciplinary module taught the theory of transformational leadership. This teaching covered two sessions; the first session explained to the participants what transformational leadership is and where in Mark 1:16-20 we see it in action. The second session explored how traditional mentorship relationships often fail to become transformational, but when transformational leadership principles are applied to mentorship, a new model emerges: transformational mentorship. It was during this second session that we explored and identified the key principles of this new model of leadership and mentorship, which will impact the mentee and the mentor as they grow in the community.

Methodology

Hypothesis

The men's ministry at Shiloh Baptist, located at 515 W. 4th St. in Plainfield, New Jersey, is experiencing low participation despite significant overall membership growth.

This problem stems from the fact that the current men's ministry model has not changed with the overall church transformation. It does not support the intercultural ministry outreach required for ministry growth.

It is hypothesized that if the men of Shiloh participate in a discipleship class focused on mentorship training, they will be equipped to serve as mentors to other men. This will transform the ministry model from a leader-based model to a relational leadership model that is foundational to building the community that will revitalize men's engagement in the ministry. It is believed this will be accomplished by equipping the men to become mentors to other men using a transformational leadership model grounded in the one that Jesus used when calling the disciples to serve.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a discipleship program that teaches a biblically based model of mentorship, emphasizing intercultural and transformational leadership competencies in reaching men. It is believed that developing men with these competencies will enable them to support and nurture a community by fostering authentic relationships in safe, sacred spaces for men.

The basis of this project is Mark 1:16-20, which records the calling of Jesus' first four disciples. To understand the power of calling and response, and how his call can cause men to leave the lives they are living to create a community of believers to serve the mission of Jesus Christ. This project was not to establish the community. The process of developing the community for men will happen over time. This project aimed to equip men to become mentors using this new model of leadership mentorship. Equipping these

men will establish the team needed to build a culture that fosters a community of sacred, safe space for men to grow together authentically.

The project was carried out over six weeks using a discipleship-program format to teach a biblical model of mentorship that emphasizes intercultural and transformational leadership competencies for reaching men. The program was available to men aged twenty-five to fifty who would become mentors equipped to transform the ministry model that spans all generations and cultures.

Project Design and Participants

I decided on a phenomenological research design, which is a qualitative research method. This was due to the study's short duration, and I aimed to capture the essence of participants' experiences to measure their affective, conative, and cognitive changes. Professional associates were consulted throughout the project's design. We reviewed methodology, implementation, data collection, and analysis. Contextual associates provided input and guidance on the class's location and timing, given that the church's calendar normally goes into sabbatical in July and August, and the potential for participant losses during the summer vacation season. The suggestion to request permission to conduct the class in July and August was approved. I had several discussions on the project with my peer associate; those discussions helped to clarify the project design throughout this work.

Each session used this format: I. Reflection on the previous lesson, II. Class lesson, III. Group discussion, and IV. Review of journaling assignment. I was looking to observe affective, conative, and cognitive changes in the men over the course of this

project. I sought to identify the following specific changes outlined below in the participants.

Affective

Changes in this category would include changes in participants' attitudes towards mentoring, increased openness to building meaningful relationships with men outside their existing social networks, and demonstrated commitment to the future mentoring involvement.

Conative

Changes in this category would include an increase in participants' expressed desire to actively mentor other men.

Cognitive

Cognitive changes would include an identifiable improvement in the participants' perceived or demonstrated mentoring skills. Once the sessions were completed, participants completed the post-survey questionnaire, and I conducted final interviews with each participant, lasting no longer than forty-five minutes.

The Collection of Data

The four data collection methods selected for this study were pre- and post-questionnaires, interviews, journaling, and group discussions.

Pre- and post-questionnaires were used to measure changes in participants before and after the class. The group discussions were to track participants' progress and engagement during the class. The journaling was to measure how well the participants are integrating the lesson and their experiences with the group. The interviews were intended to assess the participants' retention and internalization of the class.

Implementation

The project's implementation guided a group of five men through an experiential learning in transformational mentorship whose foundation is Jesus' model in the calling of his first disciples in Mark 1:16-20. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: men aged twenty-five to fifty years old and members of Shiloh Baptist Church in Plainfield, New Jersey. Flyers were shared in person and via email. My context associates and I met with men after services to discuss the project and the consent form that participants were required to sign. The men who were excluded were outside the defined age range.

Project confidentiality was maintained throughout to ensure no personal information was linked back to any of the participants. The context associate assisted in the recruitment, facilitation, and implementation of the project. To recruit participants, digital and physical flyers were used to communicate the research project and its participation requirements. The flyer was provided to members for three weeks after Sunday worship services. The digital version was sent out via email and used in the church's weekly video announcements for one week.

Context associates assisted in providing potential participants with the flyer and the consent form. Potential participants met with the researcher and context associates after the worship services to explain the project and the requirement to sign the consent form. A Zoom session was held to explain the project and the consent form to the men who expressed interest in participating in the study. The recruitment targeted men aged twenty-five to fifty who were current members of the church. The recruitment effort resulted in seven men signing up for the project, but two dropped out on the day the class started due to personal reasons. The workshop was selected to teach participants these new discipleship principles. This six-session class was used to provide instruction and group engagement on the topics and lessons, and create a sacred and safe space for participants to be authentic in the sharing and discussions.

There were a few deviations, the first was the start of the project. In the IRB, the project was to start on June 29th and June 1st. The start date had to be changed to June 22nd, because the school's authorization was June 15th, which was Father's Day. This was realigned when the preceding session could be taught. The second deviation was that the last session and the individual interviews were conducted via Zoom conference to accommodate the participants' summer vacation schedules. These sessions were recorded and are being stored with the rest of the digital data collected. The next deviation occurred during the fourth session. The session discussion on the lesson was so long that the class did not have time to complete the discussion questions. I requested that participants include them in their journal questions, but they chose not to respond to those questions. The last deviation was the loss of one of the context associates just before the study began, due to personal reasons. This did not negatively impact the study.

The topic for Session One was Overview, during which participants were given an overview of the five lessons to be taught and the scope of each lesson. Session Two, "God's Call and My Response," was a lesson in which we examined Matthew 1:16-20 and examined Jesus' Call to his first disciples and their response to his call. What was special about the call and the response, and what does that mean for us as African American Christians today, and our call and identity?

In session three, the subject was "What is Godly Manhood?" This session focused on defining manhood from both societal and biblical views. Exploring examples of good and bad definitions and how to shift from who you think you are to who you are called to be. The fourth session was "Male Mentorship Building and Growing Relationships." We explored Relational Theology as the foundation for understanding whether God is relational and whether it is okay for men to be relational. We also explored how being relational is foundational to mentorship.

Session five taught "Transformational Leadership." The definition and the theory, and where in Mark 1:16-20 do we see this form of leadership exhibited? How do we apply this to the relationship with men? For Session six, the subject was "Transformational Mentorship." This class taught participants about the power of transformational mentorship for men, explaining what it is and how to apply it in the church's ministry and with other men.

Week One – June 22, 2025 (Workshop Session)

Explain the project's duration – ten minutes

Collect any consent forms that must be signed – five minutes

Explain data collection methods and why – fifteen minutes

Filling out the pre-questionnaires – ten minutes

Review the class schedule for the next five weeks – five minutes

Icebreaker activity – ten minutes

Close in prayer and hand out journals – ten minutes

Week Two – June 29, 2025

Lesson on God's Call and My Response – fifty minutes

Group Discussion – fifteen minutes

1. What are some unique challenges and opportunities for African American men in the church today?
2. How can the men's ministry help men discover and fulfill their God-given purpose?

Close out with prayer – five minutes

Week Three – July 13, 2025

Reflection on last week's class – five minutes

Lesson on What is Godly Manhood? – forty-five minutes

Group Discussion – ten minutes

1. How does our identity in Christ shape our understanding of self-worth and masculinity?
2. How can we overcome negative stereotypes and societal pressures that affect our self-esteem?

3. How can we encourage and support each other in overcoming feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt?
4. What biblical truths can we use to affirm our value as men of God?

Close out in Prayer – five minutes

Week Four – July 20, 2025

Reflect on last week's class – five minutes

Lesson on Male Mentorship: Building and Growing Relationships? – forty-five minutes

Group discussion – ten minutes

1. How can we celebrate our heritage and our faith as African American men in the church and society?
2. How can we use our unique perspectives to contribute to the men's ministry and the church community?
3. How can we support each other in navigating the challenges and opportunities of being African American men in today's world?
4. How can we create a culture of discipleship and mentorship within the men's ministry?

Closing out with prayer – five minutes

Week Five – July 27, 2025

Lesson on Transformational Leadership – forty-five minutes

Group discussion – ten minutes

1. How can we create a strong and supportive brotherhood within the men's ministry modeled after the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?
2. How can we encourage vulnerability and authenticity in our relationships with each other?
3. How can we hold each other accountable for our spiritual growth and discipleship?

Closing out with prayer – five minutes

Week Six – August 6, 2025 (Zoom Session)

Reflections on last week's class – five minutes

Lesson on Transformational Mentorship – forty-five minutes

Group Discussion – five minutes

1. What are some characteristics of Christ-like leadership that we can strive to develop?
2. How can we use our leadership skills to serve and empower others in the church and community?
3. What are some ways we can inspire and motivate others to follow Jesus?
4. What is next for us? How do we take this further?
5. How can we create a legacy of discipleship and leadership within the men's ministry?

Fill out the post-questionnaires – ten minutes

Close out with prayer – five minutes

Week Seven – August 10, 2025 (Interviews on Zoom Sessions)

Reflections on last week's class – five minutes

Individual interviews – thirty-five minutes

Close out with prayer – five minutes

Project Data Gathering

Pre-survey questionnaires were administered during the first session, and post-survey questionnaires were provided during the sixth session of the project. These surveys were collected over the course of the week, since the sixth session was held on Zoom. Group discussions allowed the participants to engage in dialogue during sessions two through six. These were videos recorded to capture the group engagement and possible observations the researcher may have missed during the sessions. Participants recorded their responses to weekly journaling questions in both physical and electronic notebooks. The journals were collected at the end of the class sessions. Final interviews were conducted via Zoom with participants. Over the course of the seventh week, due to vacation schedules, these interviews were recorded and retained in the small cloud drive as the group discussion recordings.

Summary of Learnings

The lessons learned from this project are based on data gathered using data collection tools and a rubric for evaluating the data. The research will explain the rubric to ensure that the results will later have context and be grounded in the project's purpose. The project aimed to analyze participants' transformations using a tri-domain synthesis of

the data. The domains identified for this analysis are Affective, Conative, and Cognitive. Further analysis of the data identified an additional domain, the researcher has labeled as Institutional, Communal, and Strategic Findings.

The rubric used is a three-point scale to determine the level of change. The level of change is as follows: Exemplary (3), indicating deep integration and action-oriented results; Satisfactory (2), showing foundational understanding; and Developing (1), representing vague or static engagement. project and the associated data. We need to understand the rubric used to produce the results.

An explanation of each domain will help clarify the results. The affective domain measured the participants' emotional attitudes and relational openness. This domain specifically measured internal shifts in feelings toward mentoring and the emotional readiness to build meaningful communal bonds. To reach an exemplary level, participants had to describe mentoring as a lifelong process essential for cultural preservation and express a specific emotional commitment to bridging generational gaps. In this domain, there are three areas that were measured: (1) Attitudes Toward Mentoring, (2) Relational Openness, and (3) Commitment to Future Involvement.

The conative domain assessed the participants' volition and will to act. This domain specifically measured the participants' will, specifically their expressed desire and intention to actively mentor others. To reach an exemplary level requires evidence of an active, outward-focused commitment, in which the desire to mentor is framed as a personal responsibility to the next generation rather than a passive response to external church expectations. This domain has two areas that were measured they were: (1) Desire to mentor actively and (2) Shift to relational leadership.

The cognitive domain measured the participants' skills, knowledge, and understanding. The cognitive domain focused on the intellectual framework and leadership competencies participants developed through the study of Jesus' leadership. To achieve the exemplary rating, participants had to demonstrate a redefined, sophisticated understanding of Christ-like leadership, prioritizing qualities such as transparency, grace, and "progression not perfection" over traditional power structures. This domain has two areas they are: (1) Redefining Leadership Skills and (2) Identification of Core Competencies.

The data revealed that the discipleship class significantly impacted the men, intentionally equipping them to become mentors over a six-week period. This journey of exploring call, purpose, identity, relationships, transformational leadership, and ultimately, mentorship culminates in a model of transformational mentorship that has equipped them to mentor other men at the Shiloh Baptist Church.

The participants and I learned from several research tools used during this project. Specifically, I relied heavily on pre- and post-surveys to establish a baseline for each participant's knowledge of mentorship and transformational leadership, as well as their attitudes towards leadership and relationships with other men. The post-survey enabled us to identify shifts in their attitudes and perceptions of relationship mentorship, as well as in their own identity and calling within their faith in God. The other research tool that was leveraged and used was discussion questions that were used for most lessons which help further deepen the knowledge of the participants as we discuss these points and help them engage not only with the lesson for that we but also bringing engagement and relational engagement with each other which over the course of the six weeks began to

develop community that they could not only engage in learning but also engage in support and safety to explore their identity and authentic selves without judgment. The third research tool, journal writing, included questions related to the lessons participants completed, and participants had a week to reflect on those questions to deepen their knowledge and self-reflection on the material and their personal journey of discovery. The fourth research tool was an interview at the end of the discipleship class to provide further depth and understanding of the class's impact on participants' thoughts about the next steps. The participants' accomplishments toward the goals I identified confirmed the project's success, as indicated in the report below.

Major Finding Number One (Affective Change) – Attitude Towards Mentoring

Participants' attitudes toward mentoring shifted, and they identified mentoring as essential for African American men. Participants viewed mentorship as essential for African American men, especially those without father figures in their lives. They view mentorship as necessary for men to foster growth, provide guidance, develop cultural competency, and value preservation. They agree that mentorship is a lifelong process for spiritual and personal shaping.

First Data Exemplar

In support of this finding, when we look at the pre- and post-survey questions, "How does your commitment to following Jesus shape your involvement in the men's ministry and the church community?" Their responses reveal that this project helped the men shift from a generic attitude to a more specific, active, and relational commitment to

mentoring, especially to young men. The pre-survey responses were more generic, like P1 stated, “My commitment to following Christ is the foundation of my commitment to men’s ministry.” His post-survey response was “Because I am a follower of Jesus, I have a commitment to serve others. It is imperative that we mentor and support other men, so that younger men grow in their walk with God.” His response was more specific, focusing on the importance of mentoring.

Second Data Exemplar

The discussion question responses revealed that the men are critical of the current church structure and their place in the church; they are open-minded, progressive, and proactive in identifying solutions and addressing systemic issues in their community through mentorship. P7 stated: “The lack of black male leaders in certain positions and the challenges of the fatherless generation… we have to step up and be examples.”

Third Data Exemplar

The journaling responses revealed that in their reflections, the men identified mentorship as important to their development. They shared deep insights into why mentorship is necessary. P7 stated, “Mentorship is a necessary ingredient to transform boys to men.” This same man stated, “It’s about the lifelong process of shaping character.”

Fourth Data Exemplar

The interview responses revealed how the men connected mentorship and spiritual growth, cultural preservation, and legacy building. They also expressed a more inclusive attitude to who can be called into mentorship. P1 stated the following in the interview in response to the question "How has your understanding of Jesus' call to discipleship in Mark 1:16-20 impacted you?" He said, "I think that the scripture where he is calling the disciples was really insightful to me because it allowed Jesus to really choose a community of brothers who the world might have seen not like the popular, you know, individuals."

Major Finding Number Two (Affective Change) – Openness to Building Meaningful Relationships

Participants strongly affirmed that brotherhood and fellowship are vital for men to feel seen, understood, accountable, and grounded. The participants expressed a clear commitment to supporting the younger generations. This shows an increased openness beyond their existing circle of relationships.

First Data Exemplar

The pre- and post-surveys revealed that men were guarded and selective about who they would connect to. They were not actively seeking connections with other men outside their current circles. They were skeptical and preferred isolation and passivity in relationships with men. They have shifted toward a strong affirmation of the vital role of brotherhood in their spiritual development and community life. If we look at the question

"How vital is brotherhood and fellowship to your spiritual growth? Participant P5 disagreed in the pre-survey, but in the post-survey, he changed to strongly agree and stated, "Brotherhood is vital."

Second Data Exemplar

The discussion responses revealed a strong appreciation of the emotional and spiritual support found in the community of men. To feel seen and not isolated, and to have other men hold them accountable. Participants P4 and P6 expressed a strong need to be part of a community of men who give them a sense of not being alone.

Third Data Exemplar

The men's journal reflections reveal their openness and receptivity to community and calling, their valuing of inclusion, and most importantly, their trust in God's choices rather than their own. They are trusting because they are more open to being relational with other men.

Major Finding Number Three (Affective Change) – Demonstrated Commitment to Future Mentoring Involvement

Participants have demonstrated a commitment to future involvement in mentoring. The participants express a renewed, specific commitment to men's ministry with a focus on leadership and engaging younger men. One participant described a strong commitment to becoming a facilitator.

First Data Exemplar

Pre- and post-survey responses revealed a shift from a generic commitment to evidence of integration and to specific advocacy, and to a more active commitment to mentorship, especially to young men. In his post-survey response to the question, "P2 stated, 'My commitment is focused on being … an advocate for justice and truth… I am committed to mentoring younger me.'"

Second Data Exemplar

Discussion question responses revealed an attitude of commitment to authenticity and the recognition that their presence itself is an act of service and mentoring as they model behavior, because someone is always watching you. We see this in P7's response to the question "How can we use our leadership skills to serve and empower others in the church and community?" P7 stated, "Show up and commitment to service. Show up with your authentic self because someone is always watching when African American men are in church." I reviewed the journal responses and saw where P6 commits to overcoming hesitation to engage going forward.

Major Finding Number Four (Conative Change) – Increase in Expressed Desire to Actively Mentor

Participants have increased their desire to mentor other men. Participants' responses indicated a clear shift toward an active, focused commitment to building community for men. This desire is linked to embracing their authentic selves in Christ and to taking on a relational leadership role to serve.

First Data Exemplar

In the pre- and post-survey the questions "How comfortable are you with taking initiative and leading others in a church setting?" and "How does your commitment to following Jesus shape your involvement in the men's ministry and the church community?" revealed changes in how the men express their desire to be mentors and the depth of their intention have shifted to a deep commitment to ministry. P5 pre-survey response was more about supporting other leaders, but in his post-survey response, He says, "I'm confident leading because I understand that leadership is about influence and consistency…" The increase in commitment and focus on a specific area of ministry. P3 pre-survey response was a high level of commitment. He stated, "As for my current commitment is simply to serve in any capacity…." In his post-survey response, I observed a deeper and more focused attitude toward mentorship and ministry. He stated, "I want to show up consistently… and support the next generation through relational leadership and service."

Second Data Exemplar

The men's responses to the discussion questions have provided me with a deeper insight into their conative shift in their desire to be actively engaged as mentors. P5 response to the question "What are some of the unique challenges and opportunities for African American men in the church today?" He shared the following with the group: "But at the same time, everybody's been complaining, right? Then what are the next steps? Like what are some actual things that can be done?" This demonstrates a strong desire to move from being passive and complaining to active, measurable steps. P7

shared in a later discussion, “Show up and commitment to service.” This reveals an intention to model active behavior and commitment to service.

Third Data Exemplar

Additional insight was gained into changes among the men by reviewing the journal and interview responses. The journal questions are “What is the one thing you intend to challenge yourself to do in the men’s ministry or the church community in the next month?” and “Read Mark 1:16-20 and reflect on how Jesus called his disciples. How does this passage speak to your sense of calling and purpose?” P3, in his reflections on the first question, says. ‘I intend to challenge myself to show up consistently for the men’s ministry events and to follow up with at least two of these brothers I met in this class.” P5 shared in the second question the following: “My Purpose is not to just believe, but to actively seek out and empower others.” These observations are further evidence of the increased desire to mentor other men.

Fourth Data Exemplar

A change was also identified in the men’s desire to be active mentors in their response to the interview question. We see further confirmation of their intention to become active mentors to the men in the church and in their lives. Their intentions are also purpose-driven, grounded in Mark 1:16-20. They have made a change, but have internalized many of the lessons they have learned together.

Major Finding Number Five (Conative Change) – Shift to Relational Leadership

The conative shift was most visible in the transition from "general commitment" to "relational leadership." Participants expressed a readiness to step into the "Sacred Safe Space" as leaders who model vulnerability.

First Data Exemplar

The dialogue moved from identifying problems to demanding actionable steps. Participant P5 challenged the status quo: “Everybody’s been complaining... what are the next steps? Like what are some actual things that can be done?” This demonstrates a high level of volition—the refusal to remain passive in the face of a challenge.

Second Data Exemplar

100% of respondents expressed a desire for active relational leadership roles. Participant P2 articulated a move toward specific ownership: “[I want to move] to a more defined relational leadership role... including serving, mentoring, and building community.” Participant P7 recognized that simply "showing up" with an authentic self is a volitional act of service: “Show up with your authentic self because someone is always watching.”

Major Finding Number Six (Cognitive Change) – Redefining Leadership Skills

Participants demonstrated a high degree of cognitive refinement by reflecting on the call of the first disciples in Mark 1:16-20. They traded a "command and control" mentality for a model based on "influence, consistency, and obedience."

First Data Exemplar

Participants connected the biblical text to a strategic shift in how they intend to engage others. Participant P4: Internalized the concept of relational investment: “Jesus' style was about investing in a few men to impact many... qualities to emulate included serving others and building strong relationships [rather than status].” Participant P1: Reflected on the inclusive nature of the cognitive shift: “Jesus... chose a community of brothers who the world might have seen not like the popular... individuals.” This shows a cognitive expansion of who is "qualified" to lead.

Major Finding Number Seven (Cognitive Change) - Identification of Core Competencies

The research findings show that participants moved from a cognitive focus on "perfection" to an emphasis on Transparency, Honesty, and Mercy. They articulated that the most effective mentor is not the one who has it all together, but the one who is willing to share the journey.

First Data Exemplar

Participants recognized that God’s use of "unexpected individuals" means that personal perfection is not a prerequisite for leadership. Participant P4: Provided a sophisticated synthesis of this competency: “[I] understand that everyone has a call and a gift, and one doesn't need to be perfect or have everything together... highlighting that God can use unexpected individuals.”

Second Data Exemplar

Reflections identified "Progression, not Perfection" as a core leadership skill. Cohort-wide Finding: Participants identified that leading with conviction and discipline must be balanced with giving grace and mercy.

In conducting a thematic synthesis of the findings, the researcher identified that the domains did not change in isolation; they functioned within the tri-domain synthesis, which redefined the participant's approach to men's ministry. The integration of the domains is seen in three areas. (1) They are from Passive Presence To Relational Leadership, (2) The Progression, Not Perfection Standard, and, finally, (3) the new ministry model of Transformational Mentorship.

In the passive presence to relational leadership, we see the transition from affective (valuing brotherhood) to the Conative (will to lead), evidenced by 100% of the participants demanding actionable steps rather than remaining passive. The Progression, Not Perfection standard we see the cognitive refinement allowed men to redefine leadership as a journey of transparency and grace, directly impacting their affective readiness to be vulnerable with others. The third integration is the result: a new model of leadership for ministry called Transformational Mentorship, which centers on reciprocal relationships where both mentor and mentee are changed and switch roles.

Conclusion

This project raised awareness of the need to adopt a new model of relationship-building with the men of the Shiloh Baptist Church. This model of ministry leadership and development had to be different from the traditional method of building a

brotherhood in this context. This project was to observe and examine the implementation of a new model, which I will refer to as transformational mentorship. This model is grounded in Jesus' call to the brothers to become fishers of men in Mark 1:16-20. In this one call, Jesus engaged men to a call to community, identity, and an intimate relationship with purpose. The goal was to see if the men would want to mentor other men and be more open to engaging men outside their current circles.

It has been assessed that the project went well. The results show that the hypothesis was supported by shifts in participants' (affective) attitudes, (conative) intentions, and (cognitive) knowledge views on mentorship, as well as by the internalization of the lessons taught in the classes. The design of this project went well, as the associate professionals and context associates provided feedback and guidance on what would be appropriate and meaningful given the project's scope, which helped shape the design.

The actual implementation of the sessions, the classes, and the lessons went exceptionally well. The participants were very engaged throughout the sessions. But they became more open as we continued exploring the lessons, had the group discussions, and even reflected on their journaling questions. The data tools were that the participants decided to create a GroupMe chat to maintain relationships throughout the six weeks of the sessions. This is an excellent example of the growth all participants experienced as they began forming more intimate relationships with one another and helping one another wrestle with the challenges and issues raised in many of the discussions with which they engaged.

The data collection went well; all participants actively completed surveys, participated in discussions, provided journal entries, and participated in interviews. I will say that for data collection, there was a challenge in one of the sessions. We spent a lot of time discussing week five, and we were not able to get to those discussion questions. I offered the men the option to answer those questions as part of their journaling for that week, but they did not respond because they did not remember to do so.

One challenge observed was the timing of the sessions, which fell during the summer months, when many people are on vacation. This challenge affected Session Six, which had to be held via Zoom to accommodate those on vacation or away for work. I did raise concerns that Zoom would reduce the relational component. Still, by this session, the relationships were strong enough that engagement remained relatively the same as if they were present.

I would change the recruitment duration from three to four weeks to five to six weeks. This extended timeframe would allow more men to process it and decide whether to commit to a workshop exploring identity. The other thing I would change is to expand the age to all men eighteen and above. This expansion of the age range would provide additional data points for age and social and economic insights. This additional data point, with the increased number of participants, would enhance the study's insight by allowing analysis of reactions across generations. Even though the age range of twenty-five to fifty years of age does seem to be wide, it still leaves out a population of men that must somehow be a part of this community of sacred, safe, and space for men if we are to be effective in engaging all men in the ministry of the church.

The participants in this study were positively impacted. The men in this study developed a closer relationship with each other as they explored some areas in their lives that were very challenging, where there was fatherlessness, where they shared some of their vulnerabilities, and what it would truly mean to be a man in today's world, and as a Christian African American man. Yeah, through these discussions and their sharing, their relationships have not only strengthened within the context of the classes but outside of the classes they had been engaged more with each other in other areas of ministry and life in general which is begin to impact some of the younger men in the congregation so definitely saying definite positive impact with the participants in the broader context.

So why is the context being impacted? Because they are beginning to take a more vested interest in ministry as a whole? Their engagement has brought at least two younger men into this circle, and they're now starting to engage with them and discuss with them. There is a desire and excitement to see this course implemented on a larger scale.

My dream for the men's ministry of Shiloh Baptist Church is that it will grow to empower the men of the congregation to be empowered to identify and find their authentic self and places and spaces with other men that will develop them to be active in ministry to help spread the Gospel and to reach men within the community county state and the world that God will be glorified and soul shall be saved and in our communities will be the stronger when we have African American men who embraced our authentic self through their faith in God.

I am looking forward to teaching the discipleship class again. To provide an increased impact on the men of the Shiloh Baptist Church. I expect this six-week course

will be offered at least once a year and may train other men to teach it. As I am the minister of men in this context, the intention is to teach this course to leaders within the men's ministry so they can replicate and build culture and support the development of safe spaces for the men of our context.

APPENDIX A

DISCIPLESHIP CLASS COVERS

Discipleship Class Covers

Call and Response and Purpose – Mark 1:16-20

Goal: To explore Jesus' Call and the disciples' response to his call. Participants will learn the following:

- Know and understand what a calling is and the difference between a calling from people and a calling from Jesus.
- To understand the required response to a call from Jesus.
- How does purpose tie into calling and response?
- How do we integrate this into our lives as African American men?

1. Calling From Jesus
    a. Purpose
    b. Invitation to transformation
    c. Invitation to a new community
2. Response from the men
    a. Immediate and no hesitation
    b. What was so important about their response?
        i. Left their profession
        ii. Left their family business
        iii. Left the life that they were raised to live.
3. The role of purpose?
    a. The promise of transformation?
    b. The promise of becoming a Fisher of men
4. What does it mean for men in the church?
    a. What is our purpose?
    b. How are we responding to our purpose?
    c. What are the tools for us to respond?

Group Discussion:

- What are some unique challenges and opportunities for African American men in the church today?

- How can the men's ministry help men discover and fulfill their God-given purpose?

Journaling Prompts:

- Read Mark 1:16-20 and reflect on how Jesus called his disciples. How does this passage speak to your sense of calling and purpose?
- How was your response to the call from Jesus? Was it the same or different from the disciples? Why?

Identity (Who are you?) – What is Godly Manhood? – Mark 1:16-20

Goal: To explore how the definition of manhood shapes our identity and self-worth.

- To understand manhood's meaning from biblical and societal perspectives.
- To explore how men use their filter of manhood to understand their identity
- To look at examples of other African American men who could redefine their identity.

1. Manhood – Biblical vs Society
    a. How does society and the world define manhood
    b. Biblical Defines Manhood
2. Examples of Manhood
    a. Bad
        i. Stereotypes
    b. Good examples
        i. Lemuel Haynes
3. How to shift from who you are to who you are called to be
    a. The disciple's acceptance of their new identity
    b. Identity is anchored in Jesus' promise

Group Discussion:

- How does our identity in Christ shape our understanding of self-worth and masculinity?
- How can we overcome negative stereotypes and societal pressures that affect our self-esteem?
- How can we encourage and support each other in overcoming feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt?
- What biblical truths can we use to affirm our value as men of God?

Journaling Prompts:

- How does your identity in Christ free you from the need to prove your worth or seek validation from others?
- Reflect on the challenges and triumphs of Black men in the church and society. How do these experiences shape your sense of identity?

Male Mentorship Building and Growing Relationships – Mark 1:16-20

Goal: To understand what male mentorship is and how relationships with God and other men make a difference.

- To understand how relationships are crucial to all aspects of our lives.
- The difference between mentorship and friendship.
- Understand why this is important in the faith community of men.

1. Relational Theology as defined by theologian Thomas Jay Oord.
    a. God affects creatures in various ways. Instead of being aloof and detached, God is active and involved in relationships with others. God relates to us, and that makes an essential difference.
    b. Creatures affect God in various ways. While God's nature is unchanging, creatures influence the loving and living Creator of the universe. We relate to God, and creation makes a difference to God.
2. God and humanity are relational, which means:
    a. Humanity and God's creation are also relational
    b. Relationships are central to who and how we live our lives
    c. Men are to be in relationship with God, other people, and creation.
3. Mentorship as defined by
    a. Biblical view of mentorship
    b. Here are some key areas in the Gospel of Mark where we see mentorship:
        i. The Calling and Appointment of the Twelve (Mark 3:13-19): Jesus intentionally chooses a specific group of twelve men "that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." This selection highlights the intentionality of Jesus as a mentor, gathering a core group to invest in.
        ii. Being "With Him" (Mark 3:14): The phrase "that they might be with him" is crucial. This signifies a deeply relational form of mentorship. The disciples spent significant time with Jesus, observing his life, listening to his teaching, and experiencing his ministry firsthand. This "on-the-job" training is a hallmark of effective mentorship.

iii. Teaching and Instruction (e.g., Mark 4:10-12, 8:31-33): Jesus consistently teaches his disciples, often explaining parables privately or clarifying misunderstandings. He also prepares them for future challenges, such as his suffering and death. This transfer of knowledge and understanding is a core component of mentorship.

iv. Practical Application and Sending Out (Mark 6:7-13): Jesus sends out the twelve "two by two" with authority to preach and cast out demons. This is a practical application of their training, allowing them to gain experience and confidence in ministry under his guidance.

v. Correction and Guidance (e.g., Mark 8:33, 9:33-37, 10:35-45): The disciples often misunderstand Jesus or demonstrate flaws in their character (e.g., Peter rebuking Jesus, arguments about who is greatest, James and John seeking positions of honor). Jesus consistently corrects them, patiently guiding them towards a deeper understanding of true discipleship and servant leadership.

vi. Modeling and Example: Jesus consistently models the life he calls his disciples to live. His prayer life, his compassion for others, his obedience to the Father, and his willingness to suffer are all examples for his mentees to emulate.

c. Here are some actual statements or strongly implied definitions from the scholars mentioned:

i. Dr. David A. Thomas –

1. "Mentoring relationships provide both career functions (sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenging assignments, exposure, and visibility) and psychosocial functions (role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship) that are critical for the protégé's development and career advancement."
2. On the nature of the relationship (from his work on developmental relationships): "Truly developmental relationships are reciprocal and evolve over time, characterized by a deep personal bond that goes beyond mere instruction to encompass mutual learning and support."

ii. Dr. Shawn O. Utsey - "Therapeutic Group Mentoring with African American Male Adolescents" (Utsey et al., 2003) explicitly defines the principles guiding their culturally congruent mentoring model.

1. From Utsey et al. (2003): "The theoretical underpinning for the therapeutic group mentoring model is a West African social and cultural worldview, emphasizing principles of group above self, respect for self and others, responsibility for self and community, reciprocity, and authenticity."

iii. Michael D. Miller - his Master's Thesis, "The Impact of Mentoring African Americans Males during Their Undergraduate Experience at Predominantly White Institutions"
    1. From his abstract/introduction (paraphrased based on typical thesis content): "Mentoring, in this context, is defined as a relationship where an experienced individual provides guidance, support, and resources to African American male undergraduates to help them navigate academic and social challenges at Predominantly White Institutions, thereby fostering their academic success, personal development, and persistence."

iv. David Miller, M.Ed. (The Urban Leadership Institute) his work, particularly through The Urban Leadership Institute, focuses on the practical application and necessity of mentorship for African American males.
    1. From "MAN UP: Recruiting & Retaining African American Male Mentors" "Mentorship for African American males is not just about guidance; it is about providing a lifeline, a bridge between challenging circumstances and pathways to success. It is about equipping them with the tools, the wisdom, and the role models necessary to transcend societal barriers and fulfill their potential as responsible men, fathers, and community leaders."

Group Discussion:

- How can we create a strong and supportive brotherhood within the men's ministry modeled after the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?
- How can we encourage vulnerability and authenticity in our relationships with each other?
- How can we hold each other accountable for our spiritual growth and discipleship?

Journaling Prompts:

- What qualities do you value in a mentor or a brother in Christ, based on the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?
- Write about a time when you felt supported and encouraged by another man in the church.
- How can you use your leadership skills to create a discipleship culture within the men's ministry, following the example of Jesus?
- What practical ways can you mentor and disciple other men in the church, helping them grow in their faith and leadership?

Transformational Leadership – Mark 1:16-20

Goal: To understand that transformational leadership and its application in mentorship are crucial.

- Know the definition of transformational leadership
- How transformational leadership is different from typical leadership
- How to apply transformational leadership within our lives.

1. What is Transformational Leadership?
    a. Defined
    b. Difference between other Leadership Models
2. Is Transformational Leadership in the Bible?
    a. Mark 1:16-20
3. How do we apply this to our relationships with men?

Group Discussion:

- How can we celebrate our heritage and our faith as African American men in the church and society?
- How can we use our unique perspectives to contribute to the men's ministry and the church community?
- How can we support each other in navigating the challenges and opportunities of being African American men in today's world?
- How can we create a culture of discipleship and mentorship within the men's ministry?

Journaling Prompts:

- How does your faith in Christ shape your understanding of what it means to be an African American man in the church and society?
- How can you build a "band of brothers" within the men's ministry, following the example of Jesus and his disciples?
- Write a letter to your younger self, offering encouragement and guidance based on your faith and your journey as a disciple of Jesus.

Transformational Mentorship – Mark 1:16-20

Goal: To understand the power of transformational mentorship for men.

- Learn what transformational mentorship is.
- How do we apply it in the ministry or the church?
- Explore ways use it to grow other men into disciples for Jesus Christ

Group Discussion:

- What are some characteristics of Christ-like leadership that we can strive to develop?
- How can we use our leadership skills to serve and empower others in the church and community?
- What are some ways we can inspire and motivate others to follow Jesus?
- What is next for us? How do we take this further?
- How can we create a legacy of discipleship and leadership within the men's ministry?

Journaling Prompts:

- Reflect on Jesus' leadership style in Mark 1:16-20. How can you emulate his qualities to become a more effective leader in the church?
- Write about a time when you had to make a difficult decision that impacted others in the church. How did your faith and understanding of leadership guide your decision-making process?

Interview Questions:

- How has your understanding of Jesus' call to discipleship in Mark 1:16-20 impacted you?

- Why do you think mentorship is essential for men in the church, based on the example of Jesus and his disciples?
- Do you see value in being involved in the men's ministry? Why?
- What are your plans after the class is over?

APPENDIX B

PRE- AND POST-QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Analysis Summary

Analysis Comparing Pre- and Post-Survey Responses (for participants who provided post-survey feedback)	
Question	**Analysis**
How does your commitment to following Jesus shape your involvement in the men's ministry and the church community?	Responses shifted from foundational or general commitment to more **active, outward-focused** commitment, including serving, mentoring, building community, embracing **authentic self in Christ**, and moving to a more defined **relational leadership** role.
What does being an African American man of God mean in today's society?	One participant's response remained consistent. Others showed shifts: from doing the "difficult right thing" to viewing faith as **essential armor** and a guide; becoming more explicit in **rejecting negative societal stereotypes** and establishing a positive identity; and moving from balancing identities to an **assertive stance on confident leadership** and character-driven living.
How does your faith in Christ empower you to overcome feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt?	Responses evolved from general statements to a more **personal and impactful understanding of worth** in God's eyes, leading to a desire to uplift others. Shifts included moving from God covering inabilities to an **active engagement of talking through troubles with Jesus**, and a move toward a deeper understanding of God's **equipping power in leadership**.
What are some biblical principles or figures that inspire you to embrace your value as a man of God?	Inspiration shifted for participants: from general principles to the **specific figure of Joshua** (emphasizing leadership); from just prayer to a deeper belief in **God's control**; from specific biblical figures to the **practical application of the Fruit of the Spirit**; and expanding to include more figures and the principle of **mutual sharpening within community**.

Analysis Comparing Pre- and Post-Survey Responses (for participants who provided post-survey feedback)	
How does your identity as a disciple of Jesus shape your understanding of what it means to be an African American man in the church and society?	Understanding evolved: from raising the next generation to a more comprehensive role as a **servant leader committed to justice**; from general grace to a strong sense of responsibility as a **role model**; becoming more explicit about **rejecting "identity labels"**; and developing a **holistic understanding** of purpose as a Black man reflecting God's image and leading with faith and resilience.
Who are some historical, cultural, and or biblical figures or leaders who inspire you to live out your faith with boldness and authenticity?	Inspiration shifted: from general biblical figures to a detailed appreciation of Dr. MLK's faith-driven activism; remaining consistent but **adding Jesus as a continuous source of learning**; providing a **more structured list** of figures; and expanding to include **more contemporary figures** with a deeper reflection on inspirational qualities.
How vital is brotherhood and fellowship to your spiritual growth?	Most consistently rated it as **vital** ("Strongly Agree"/"Agree"). One participant shifted slightly from "Strongly Agree" to "Agree," while another deepened from "Agree" to **"Strongly Agree,"** with a more emphatic articulation of its **essential role**.
How comfortable are you with taking initiative and leading others in a church setting?	Positive trend in comfort with leadership: One participant moved from "Neutral (Learning)" to **"Agree."** Another shifted from "Agree" to **"Strongly Agree."** A third demonstrated a significant increase, moving from "Neutral" to **"Strongly Agree,"** with a clear understanding of leadership as influence.
How comfortable are you with public speaking or sharing your faith with others?	One participant showed a notable improvement, moving from **"Disagree" to "Agree,"** indicating increased comfort and a deeper understanding of the impact of transparency. Two others consistently expressed strong agreement, and one remained "Neutral."

APPENDIX C

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DATA

Discussion Questions Data

Question 1: What are some unique challenges and opportunities for African American men in the church today?

- **Summary:** The discussion highlights the need for African American men in the church to embrace open-mindedness and progressive thinking. One speaker observed a resistance to "evolution" or new ideas among many individuals, suggesting that overcoming this resistance presents both a challenge and an opportunity for growth within the church community.

Question 2: How can the men's ministry help men discover and fulfill their God-given purpose?

- **Summary:** The conversation around this question points to mentorship as a crucial element in helping men discover and fulfill their divine purpose. Speakers explored the process of identifying one's God-given purpose and then taking action to realize it, emphasizing the supportive role a men's ministry can play in this journey.

Question 3: How does our identity in Christ shape our understanding of self-worth and masculinity?

- **Summary:** This question delves into how the identity of African American men in Christ influences their understanding of self-worth and masculinity. A speaker shared their professional experience of encountering many "broken" and "abused" brothers, suggesting that the church and its teachings on identity in Christ have a vital role in healing and affirming these men.

Question 4: How can we overcome negative stereotypes and societal pressures that affect our self-esteem?

- **Summary:** The input suggests that overcoming negative stereotypes and societal pressures primarily involves a shift in perspective. A speaker acknowledged that stereotypes are likely to persist but emphasized that individuals have control over their reactions and thoughts regarding these external pressures, thereby impacting their self-esteem.

Question 5: How can we encourage and support each other in overcoming feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt?

- **Summary:** This question was assigned as a journal assignment, indicating that participants were encouraged to reflect on this topic individually. Therefore, no direct discussion input was provided in the active context.

Question 6: What biblical truths can we use to affirm our value as men of God?

- **Summary:** Similar to question 5, this question was assigned as a journal assignment, meaning participants were expected to explore biblical truths relevant to affirming their value as men of God through personal reflection. No direct discussion input was available.

Question 7: How can we celebrate our heritage and our faith as African American men in the church and society?

- **Summary:** The discussion around this question touched upon the concept of transformational leadership from an African American perspective. This suggests that celebrating heritage and faith involves demonstrating leadership that is rooted in their unique cultural and spiritual experiences, both within the church and in broader society.

Question 8: How can we use our unique perspectives to contribute to the men's ministry and the church community?

- **Summary:** This question encouraged African American men to consider how their distinct viewpoints can enrich the men's ministry and the wider church community. The input prompted individuals to reflect on their potential contributions, regardless of whether they are currently active in such roles.

Question 9: How can we support each other in navigating the challenges and opportunities of being African American men in today's world?

- **Summary:** The input for this question highlights the importance of "continued dialogue" as a means of mutual support. This suggests that ongoing conversations and shared experiences are essential for African American men to navigate the evolving challenges and opportunities they face in contemporary society.

Question 10: How can we create a culture of discipleship and mentorship within the men's ministry?

- **Summary:** To foster a culture of discipleship and mentorship, one speaker proposed the implementation of "subgroups." This approach implies that smaller, more intimate groups can provide a more effective and accessible environment for

fostering spiritual growth and guiding individuals through mentorship within the men's ministry.

Question 11: How can we create a strong and supportive brotherhood within the men's ministry modeled after the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?

- **Summary:** This question was assigned as a journal assignment, indicating that participants were meant to reflect on this topic individually. Consequently, there was no direct discussion input provided in the active context.

Question 12: How can we encourage vulnerability and authenticity in our relationships with each other?

- **Summary:** This question was also assigned as a journal assignment, suggesting that participants were encouraged to consider and explore ways to promote vulnerability and authenticity in their relationships through personal reflection. No direct discussion input was available.

Question 13: How can we hold each other accountable for our spiritual growth and discipleship?

- **Summary:** As a journal assignment, this question encouraged individual reflection on strategies for mutual accountability in spiritual growth and discipleship. There was no direct discussion input provided in the active context.

Question 14: What are some characteristics of Christ-like leadership that we can strive to develop?

- **Summary:** This question was assigned as a journal assignment, indicating that participants were expected to personally consider and identify characteristics of Christ-like leadership they could cultivate. No direct discussion input was available.

Question 15: How can we use our leadership skills to serve and empower others in the church and community?

- **Summary:** The input for this question emphasizes the importance of "showing up and commitment to service" and presenting one's "authentic self." One speaker referenced the distinct impact of a brother responding in worship compared to a woman, highlighting the unique power and influence African American men can bring through their authentic leadership and service.

Question 16: What are some ways we can inspire and motivate others to follow Jesus?

- **Summary:** The discussion centered on intrinsic motivation and authenticity. Brian shared an experience where his appearance led to him being challenged for not looking like a preacher, prompting a conversation about the importance of being authentic. Mike concurred, reinforcing the idea that presenting oneself as genuinely as possible is key to inspiring and motivating others.

Question 17: What is next for us? How do we take this further?

- **Summary:** This question was shifted to be a journal assignment for the participants, indicating that they were encouraged to personally reflect on future steps and how to advance their discussions and initiatives.

Question 18: How can we create a legacy of discipleship and leadership within the men's ministry?

- **Summary:** This question was also shifted to be a journal assignment, suggesting that participants were tasked with individually considering how to establish a lasting legacy of discipleship and leadership within the men's ministry.

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF JOURNALING QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Summary of Journaling Questions and Responses

Journaling Question	Summary of Participant Responses
Read Mark 1:16-20 and reflect on how Jesus called his disciples. How does this passage speak to your sense of calling and purpose?	**Participants connected the calling to a foundation of trust, leaving everything to follow, and recognized God is always moving while individuals choose to follow. Jesus chooses unexpected people. Responses also noted the varying degrees of compliance and faith among disciples and the intentionality of Jesus' choices for mutual sharpening and growth.**
How was your response to the call from Jesus? Was it the same or different from the disciples? Why?	**Responses indicated their calls were different from the disciples. Examples included rededicating a life after straying, acknowledging God's choice and expressing gratitude while struggling with using gifts wisely, and taking the first step of acknowledging and connecting, anticipating sacrifice.**
How does your identity in Christ free you from the need to prove your worth or seek validation from others?	**Responses varied. Some found that their relationship with Christ provides the criteria for what is important and that God's validation is ultimate. Others were unsure how identity in Christ frees them, viewing external validation as a natural human response. Another found security through years of their walk with God. One felt they still had to prove their worth daily and that overcoming the need for validation was not a direct byproduct of their identity.**

Reflect on the challenges and triumphs of Black men in the church and society. How do these experiences shape your sense of identity?	**Challenges in the church included connecting across generations and the need for more mentorship and support to address feelings of being judged. Society's stereotypes were noted. Triumphs included learning to seek understanding rather than judge when mentoring, securing identity through positive male influences in Christ, and referencing historical figures who relied on dignity and hope in God during adversity. Male mentorship was highlighted as important.**
How does your faith in Christ shape your understanding of what it means to be an African American man in the church and society?	**No responses were provided for this question.**
How can you build a "band of brothers" within the men's ministry, following the example of Jesus and his disciples?	**No responses were provided for this question.**
Write a letter to your younger self-offering encouragement and guidance based on your faith and your journey as a disciple of Jesus.	**No responses were provided for this question.**
What qualities do you value in a mentor or a brother in Christ, based on the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?	**Valued qualities included patience, honesty, ability to empower, empathy, and speaking life into others. Also noted were loyalty, compassion, trustworthiness, teachability, and flexibility. One participant specifically valued someone personable, vulnerable, and blunt who can hold them accountable.**
Write about a time when you felt supported and encouraged by another man in the church.	**Participants shared experiences such as a Reverend offering his story, wisdom, and continued encouragement during marital issues ; a Rev. being welcoming and providing consistent check-ins ; and a Deacon offering career advice and reaffirmation.**

How can you use your leadership skills to create a discipleship culture within the men's ministry, following the example of Jesus?	**Emphasized transparency, vulnerability, leading by example, and modeling behaviors. Suggestions included being reliable and honest, and reaching out to the unchurched to show Christian care and calling brothers to show they are seen and loved. Also noted were maintaining honesty and integrity, leading with truth and love, and a relational coaching approach through shared experiences.**
What practical ways can you mentor and disciple other men in the church, helping them grow in their faith and leadership?	**Suggested empowering and challenging men by providing opportunities for growth and leadership to ensure they don't remain stagnant. Specifics included mentoring fathers, husbands, and college students, and being a mentor to new church members. Others emphasized getting to know men, sharing testimonies, being transparent, and assisting them in their spiritual journey.**
Reflect on Jesus' leadership style in Mark 1:16-20. How can you emulate his qualities to become a more effective leader in the church?	**Reflected on Jesus' style of investing in a few men to impact many. Qualities to emulate included serving others, modeling behavior, and building strong relationships. Also highlighted were showing compassion, understanding, being an inspiration, giving grace and mercy, and leading with conviction and discipline. One suggested challenging the process within the church and bringing forth innovative ideas.**
Write about a time when you had to make a difficult decision that impacted others in the church. How did your faith and understanding of leadership guide your decision-making process?	**One participant had not faced such a decision but hoped to use transparency, honesty, love, and grace. Another described canceling or postponing a ministry event to prioritize quality, with faith guiding them to reflect God's grace and non-judgmental nature in their leadership. A third admitted to a selfish decision not guided by faith or leadership understanding at the time.**

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE SUMMARIES

Interview Questions and Response Summaries

Interview Question	Summary of Responses
How has your understanding of Jesus' call to discipleship in Mark 1:16-20 impacted you? [1]	Participants found the scripture deeply **impactful**, highlighting themes of **divine calling**, **transformation**, and the importance of **faith and perseverance.**[2] Many emphasized that God uses **diverse individuals** regardless of background, and that the calling is a **journey with challenges.**[3] Lived experiences were noted to deepen the understanding of scripture.[4]
Why do you think mentorship is essential for men in the church, based on the example of Jesus and his disciples? [5]	**Mentorship** is considered essential for **growth**, providing **guidance**, and building **relationships.**[6] It is particularly crucial for **cultural competency** and value preservation, especially for Black men.[7] It helps men to be **authentic**, **open up**, and find **balance.**[8] The Jesus-disciples example underscores the importance of **trust** and **accountability.**[9] It is viewed as a **lifelong process** that shapes individuals spiritually and personally.[10]
Do you see value in being involved in the men's ministry? Why? [11]	Involvement is highly valued for the **guidance and support** from experienced men, especially for **African American men** who may lack father figures.[12] It fosters **personal growth**, **spiritual development**, and a sense of **community.**[13] Participants also see value in being **positive role models** for younger generations, bridging gaps, and making the ministry relatable.[14] The difficulty in engaging men in gatherings was also acknowledged.[15]
What are your plans after the class is over? [16]	Plans included a renewed commitment to **men's ministry**, with a focus on **leadership** and engaging younger members.[17] There was also a personal goal of deeper **spiritual growth** through a structured Bible reading plan.[18]

Thematic Synthesis of Participant Responses (Affective, Conative, Cognitive)

This analysis uses the modified rubric to score the **collective body of evidence** gathered from all participants' data against my specific observation goals.

Domain	Criterion	Collective Evidence from Participant Responses	Qualitative Score
I. Affective (Attitudes & Feelings)	**a. Attitude Towards Mentoring**	**Exemplary Evidence:** Mentorship is viewed as **essential** for **growth, guidance, cultural competency, and value preservation**, particularly for **African American men** who may lack father figures. It is described as a **lifelong process** for spiritual and personal shaping.	**Exemplary** (3 Points)
	b. Openness to Building Meaningful Relationships	**Exemplary Evidence:** Participants strongly affirmed that **brotherhood and fellowship are vital** for feeling **"seen, understood, accountable, and grounded."** A clear commitment to **bridging generational gaps** and providing support for younger generations demonstrates openness beyond existing networks.	**Exemplary** (3 Points)
	c. Demonstrated Commitment to Future Mentoring Involvement	**Exemplary Evidence:** Plans included a **renewed and specific commitment** to men's ministry, with a focus on **leadership** and engaging younger members. One key participant expressed a strong commitment to becoming a **facilitator.**	**Exemplary** (3 Points)
II. Conative (Expressed Desire & Intention)	**a. Increase in Expressed Desire to Actively Mentor**	**Exemplary Evidence:** Responses indicated a clear shift toward an **active, outward-focused commitment** (from general to service/mentoring/building community). The desire is explicitly linked to embracing the **authentic self in Christ** and taking a **relational leadership** role to serve and **mentor the next generation.**	**Exemplary** (3 Points)

III. Cognitive (Skills & Understanding)	**a. Improvement in Perceived or Demonstrated Mentoring Skills**	**Exemplary Evidence:** Participants demonstrated a **redefined and sophisticated understanding** of Christ-like leadership/mentoring. They emphasized qualities to emulate, including **serving others, modeling behavior, showing compassion, giving grace and mercy, and leading with conviction and discipline** ("progression, not perfection").	**Exemplary** (3 Points)

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